HAITI: A JUST RESPONSE

THE Nation.

MUSCLING LATIN AMERICA

AWACS Radar Plane

Honduras
Enrique Soto Cano Airbase

El Salvador
Comalapa International Airport

Cuba
Guantánamo Bay
Naval Station

Puerto Rico
Fort Buchanan Base

Aruba
Reina Beatrix International Airport

Curaçao
Hato International Airport

US Navy 4th Fleet

Colombia

Málaga	Palanquero	Larandia
Cartagena	Tolemaida	Arauca
Malambo	Apiay	Tres Esquinas

Peru
Iquitos riverine training school
used by US forces

THE PENTAGON'S NEW MONROE DOCTRINE

GREG GRANDIN

FEBRUARY 8, 2010
TheNation.com

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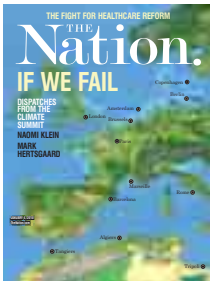

Love Those Sunken Cities!

Knoxville, Tenn.
I love your January 4 cover. I've seen the climate-change mug, but the enlarged view on your cover shows more people more clearly what can happen if we do nothing. Now, how about one of our East Coast, not just New York City and Miami but those pricey oceanfront communities from Maine through the Keys? Then another of the West Coast. People need to see that this would hurt *them*, not just some remote islands they've never heard of.
Shirley E. Hastings

Cockburn's Climate Catastrophe

Cape Girardeau, Mo.
It is not my habit to threaten to end my subscription, but the column by Alexander Cockburn titled "From Nicaea to Copenhagen" [Jan. 4] has tipped me over the edge. I was seriously disappointed to read Cockburn's pack of lies, deceptions and distortions on climate change.
Alan Journet

Webster, N.Y.
I have renewed confidence in the journalistic integrity of *The Nation*. I will definitely renew my subscription. I am delighted with Alexander Cockburn's exposé of the insane idea that anthropogenic carbon dioxide is driving the warming of the climate.
Clifford Eddy

Santa Fe
The other night, lying in bed, I was too cold to sleep. So I threw a third blanket on top of the two I already had, and was soon sleeping soundly, warm and snug. So I was surprised the next morning to find that the warmth from the third blanket must have been my imagination: Alexander Cockburn wrote that "a cooler body cannot warm a hotter body without compensation." Perhaps his interpretation of the second law of thermodynamics requires that I put my third blanket *under* the others?
Gregory Swift

Malibu, Calif.
On a cold day, in my solar-heated house, I close my windows. With Cockburn's new (mis)understanding of the sacred second law of thermodynamics, this action is useless because the cold closed window cannot possibly heat the warmer house. But my house is heated by the solar radiation, and closing the window reduces my heat loss, resulting in a warmer house. Without greenhouse gases in our atmosphere, all the long-wave radiation would escape into space, and earth would be a huge ice ball, as it was long ago. The cold greenhouse gases in our atmosphere absorb some of the outgoing radiation and reradiate some of it back to the warmer earth. The net heat flow is still outward, from warm to cold. Greenhouse gases reduce this outward flow, allowing the solar-heated earth to warm—just like closing my window.
Frank Thomas

Toronto
Alexander Cockburn's first main point about the climate is absolutely right. Climate science is not simple and is not all wrapped up. He's right to chide any East Anglia climate scientists who thought they had to kid the public that it was. But then Cockburn goes into denial of his own point, maintaining that climate science is simplicity itself: there is no greenhouse effect, he says, for the cold upper atmosphere couldn't transfer heat to the earth's surface. However, as in a real greenhouse, heat is transferred through the cold panes in winter to heat the beds inside. The second law, and climate science, survive. Neither is simple.
Chandler Davis

Berkeley, Calif.
I'm not a scientist, but if nine out of ten doctors told me I had a serious, life-threatening illness, I wouldn't listen to the one doctor who said there was no problem. (And more than 90 percent of climate scientists think global warming is a problem and is caused by humans.)
Catherine Kunkel

letters@thenation.com

(continued on page 24)

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Massachusetts Meltdown

Even before Massachusetts voters sent a wake-up call to President Obama and Congressional Democrats in the form of a conservative Republican successor to Edward Kennedy,

EDITORIAL

mainstream pundits and Democratic proponents of caution and compromise were misreading it. Martha Coakley did not lose the Senate race to Scott Brown because Massachusetts voters suddenly turned into tea partyers.

Coakley's problem was twofold. The state attorney general ran a cautious, by-the-numbers campaign that failed to energize Democrats and independents—the vast majority of Bay State voters. While ranting by national conservatives about creeping socialism meshed with Brown's anti-tax, anti–national healthcare message to fire up angry Republicans and "throw the bums out" independents, frustrated Democrats wondered why they should maintain a sixty-seat Senate majority to pass a lame healthcare bill and surge more troops into Afghanistan.

When Democrats finally figured out they were in trouble, party activists and their labor movement allies scrambled to find an issue that would energize the base. It wasn't healthcare, and it certainly wasn't foreign policy. With their supermajority in jeopardy, Obama and his team suddenly realized Americans are mad as hell at big bankers and an economic "recovery" that found its way to Wall Street but bypassed Main Street. In his last-minute campaign stop for Coakley, Obama sounded more populist than at any time since his election. "I'm fighting for financial reforms to stop Wall Street from playing havoc with our economy," he told voters. That was the right message. But it was delivered way too late and with an air of desperation that did little to inspire confidence that his administration is really going to crack down on Wall Street speculators and errant CEOs.

Yes, progressive populism is exactly what Obama and his allies should be preaching when the official unemployment rate is 10 percent and the real number is above 17 percent. But Democrats should know by now that for a populist message from those in power to be taken seriously, it must be delivered consistently and credibly. The approach of the administration and Congress to healthcare has run into difficulty not because the proposals are too bold but because what is being sold as reform is far too generous to Big Insurance and Big Pharma and far too tight-fisted when it comes to bringing good, affordable coverage to more Americans. Obama and his Congressional allies must not abandon the push for reform; they must strengthen their resolve. If this healthcare legislation fails, it could snuff out any chance for action in areas like financial regulation, immigration and employee free choice.

The president should also recognize that claims about the success of his stimulus program ring hollow to laid-off workers. And an auto bailout that is closing plants does not make any more sense than a bank bailout that is enriching CEOs and stockholders but doing little to free up credit for small businesses, farms or families struggling to keep their homes.

Massachusetts sent a wake-up call, no doubt about it. But it was not a call for abandonment of—or further compromise on—healthcare, easing off big banks or a laissez-faire approach to rising unemployment. The signal from Massachusetts is that the murky politics of bipartisanship aren't cutting it in Boston, Worcester or anywhere else in America. That's the message Democrats must hear if they are to have any hope of maintaining majorities in Congress this fall.

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What Haiti Is Owed

EDITORIAL

In the aftermath of the earthquake that hit Haiti on January 12, killing as many as 200,000 people, a recurring metaphor has been used to describe the scene: Haiti is hell on earth. It may seem strange to quibble over words when so many people are suffering so much. But words matter, and hell is one we should resist using. For one thing, it demeans the humanity of Haiti's survivors—who are shaken, bloodied, hungry, thirsty, frightened and weary—but not damned. During the day, they clear rubble with their bare hands and pull bodies—a few living, most dead—from the wreckage. At night they sing for solace under stars and tents; there are no buildings left. There have been a few reports of violence, but for the most part Haitians have acted like any others facing immense disaster—organizing mutual aid, sharing what food and water are available, getting care to the neediest and waiting… waiting for help to arrive.

How much and how quickly that help comes are vital concerns, but equally important is what form that aid takes. There are reports that US troops initially militarized the Port-au-Prince airport, leading to complaints that they were prioritizing planes bringing in security personnel and weapons instead of humanitarian aid. Médecins Sans Frontières reports that five of its aircraft carrying equipment and medicine were turned away and diverted to the Dominican Republic, delaying delivery by days. Meanwhile, MSF clinics in Haiti lack very basic supplies. One MSF worker in the shantytown of Cité Soleil said, "We were forced to buy a saw in the market to continue amputations. We are running against time here."

Given that the United States occupied Haiti on and off throughout the twentieth century, Haitians have every right to be wary about the presence of thousands of American GIs. Some soldiers distributing aid have reportedly removed their helmets, body armor and ammunition in an attempt to signal their intentions. Instead of indulging in the media's anticipation of mob violence and chaos [see "The Haiti Haters," page 5], the US military should amplify this message at all levels: this is a humanitarian mission only, and the United States has no intention to "secure" Port-au-Prince or any other part of Haiti.

This principle of self-determination ought to drive the economic aid Haiti receives as well, not just now but through its long recovery. Here it's important to recall that for much of Haiti's existence, foreign powers like the United States, France and Britain have used debt not just to control but to plunder it. In the nineteenth century the French forced Haiti into paying reparations of some 150 million francs to French slave owners. It took Haitians 122 years, but in 1947 they were finally able to pay off what remained of this debt. Yet this came at the enormous cost of its development: at one point the Haitian government was spending 80 percent of its national budget on repayments. In the 1990s the Clinton administration and international lenders like the World Bank, IMF and the Inter-American Development Bank pressured Haiti into structural adjustment policies that opened the country up to imports and to the privatization of state-run industries and public infrastructure like the telephone,

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education and healthcare systems. The dire state of affairs that preceded the earthquake—poverty, deforestation, food shortages, broken schools and malnutrition—is this history's legacy. It's a kind of hell, perhaps, but a man-made one.

Last year, much of Haiti's debt was forgiven, but some $1 billion remains. The biggest loan holders—the World Bank, the IMF, the Inter-American Development Bank, Venezuela and Taiwan—should forgive Haiti's outstanding debt, and any new aid should be dispersed as grants, not loans. When the IMF announced a $100 million loan to Haiti on January 14, one that may have come with conditions like freezing public employees' salaries, debt relief activists around the world sounded the alarm. On January 20 the IMF announced that the new loan comes at zero percent interest with no strings attached and that it is now "working with all donors to try to delete all the Haitian debt, including our new loan." The promise of debt relief coinciding nearly simultaneously with a loan announcement is unprecedented in IMF history and is a demonstration of the power activists can have when the world's attention is drawn to a humanitarian crisis of such magnitude. Tearing up Haiti's debt would free much-needed capital for rebuilding the country; it would also just begin to compensate Haiti for the historic theft of its resources. Long after the cameras have left, global activists will have to be vigilant to make sure these pledges are kept so that Haitians can finally write a new history, for and by themselves.

The Haiti Haters

COMMENT

The Haitian tragedy has opened up a whole new industry for what I call the genteel racist point of view. A week into the crisis I heard an otherwise intelligent report on NPR in which the correspondent opened her piece from Port-au-Prince by declaring that it "is not falling into a…pit of violence," thereby giving us an idea of what she had been anticipating, almost breathlessly. We heard this kind of thing frequently in the days after the earthquake, with scores of fresh reporters receiving their Haitian baptism amid the rubble. There are many problems in Haiti, but most of the negative pronouncements that have been circulating do not touch on them. The commentary has been psychopolitical rather than analytical.

At least reporters, while their views may be wrongheaded, are giving us new information from the ground. Far more insidious are the armchair commentators who know nothing about Haiti—many never having set toe there—but enjoy rebuking suffering Haitians from the comfort of their white bastions in the United States and Europe. I've never seen victims so roundly blamed for their fate. David Brooks's recent column in the *New York Times*—one of the paper's most e-mailed articles the week it was published—blamed Haiti's culture for the quake's violence.

"It is time," Brooks writes sententiously, "to put the thorny issue of culture at the center of efforts to tackle global poverty. Why is Haiti so poor? Well, it has a history of oppression, slavery and colonialism. But so does Barbados, and Barbados is doing pretty well."

By all means, let's turn to actual history, which Brooks has mangled. As has been mentioned repeatedly, the Haitian slaves rose up in 1791 and began what was to become the only successful slave revolution in modern history. That war ended, after much loss of life on both sides, with the establishment of the world's first black republic, in 1804—just twenty-eight years after the American Declaration of Independence. The Haitians' models were the American and French revolutions, and they based their ideas on the Declaration of the Rights of Man. But their revolution seems to have been a little premature for the tastes of the world in which they had to operate. Haiti was almost immediately saddled with a gargantuan and punitive reparations payment to France in exchange for recognition and the ability to engage in unhampered international trade. The wealthy, slaveholding United States did not recognize Haiti until 1862, after the Southern states seceded. Haiti has been a pariah nation for its entire history.

Barbados, on the other hand: the Barbadians made their bold stand for independence from Britain in… 1966. The British had already given up slavery more than a century earlier. It was an unbloody, negotiated independence, and Barbados is still a part of the British Commonwealth. In fact, its membership began on the date of independence, as did Jamaica's, in 1962, when it shrugged off the very loose shackles of the remnant of British colonialism. The British were less brutal masters than the French, and in the eighteenth century it was probably wiser to remain a colony under them than, as the Haitians did, gain your freedom at the expense of your economic welfare.

Brooks goes on to discuss the Haitian family, seemingly basing his argument on a book by Lawrence Harrison, a conservative cultural critic who also knows nothing about Haiti. "Child-rearing practices" in Haiti, Brooks writes, "often involve neglect in the early years and harsh retribution when kids hit 9 or 10." I don't know where this assertion comes from, but it reminds me of nothing so much as Daniel Patrick Moynihan's controversial and misguided report on the black family in the 1960s. I've never seen either of these child-rearing practices in my two decades of living in and covering Haiti. In fact, I see more parents carrying small children around in Haiti's markets than I do at the farmers' markets in Los Angeles. You can't write these kinds of things about people whose culture and nation you respect. Nor would an editor permit you to say such things blithely about people who are considered our equals or are able to respond in equally august publications. Right now, the Haitians cannot—they're too busy getting water for their neglected children.

Let's move briefly to Anne Applebaum's similar column, which appeared in the *Washington Post*. Anne's a little depressed. She opens her piece (as she so often does) by telling us about herself; her reactions are important to her: "For the past several days, I have found myself unable to look at the photographs from Haiti. I have also found that when I start an article datelined Port-au-Prince, I have to force myself to read to the end." Although she doesn't like to read about it, she knows what's at the heart of her reluctance: "I have no illusions about anyone's ability to help, for this…is a man-made disaster first and foremost, and so it will remain." She goes on to fault the weakness of Haiti's public institutions for the physical collapse of buildings, including the Presidential Palace (constructed by the Marines during

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the 1915–34 US occupation of Haiti) and many other public edifices built by perfectly well-educated architects using the best practices of their day. It's a stunningly heartless argument.

Applebaum tells us that she was not this hopeless after the Indian Ocean tsunami or Hurricane Katrina, and that it was easy to coordinate basic assistance in those cases. Of course, this is patently not true, as anyone who has read about or experienced those situations knows. Applebaum goes on to say that there were no scenes in Aceh, Indonesia, of "what everyone always calls 'biblical' tragedy." The reason some people call the Haitian quake biblical is that they believe, whether consciously or not, that it is a sort of divine retribution for the temerity of the Haitian Revolution, and for the idea that black people could take charge of their own lives. As Pat Robertson put it, the Haitians made a deal with the Devil to throw off French rule. That's how he sees it, and by extension, though in much more genteel terms, that's how many other commentators see it. One cannot help but wonder, then, what the Lord was avenging when he brought down an earthquake on San Francisco in 1989, or on Los Angeles in 1994. Gay rights? Bad movies?

But let's look at things clearly, without prejudice. Haiti was in bad shape before the earthquake. Though outside forces like debt, economic sanctions, US interference and a big but diffuse and uncoordinated development community have grievously harmed the country, Haitians too are responsible for their problems. The government is weak and—although much improved in recent years—still corrupt here and there, and still plagued by internecine fighting over the tiny bits of funding that are available in a country with microscopic national coffers. Taxes are not properly collected, and well-connected families and officials fight to the death over things like where emergency response teams or bridges should be located (my province or yours?). Appropriations battles are even harder fought in the Haitian legislature than in the US Congress, and over much smaller streams of money. And powerful drug traffickers have taken refuge in this governmentally lax situation, as they have in Mexico and Colombia.

The country is also too centralized. Everything depends on the government in Port-au-Prince. All the money flows out of that great city to the provinces, when it flows at all. But with people fleeing the destroyed capital, now's a good time to consider federalizing Haiti. The countryside needs funding sources other than the usually paralyzed national legislature. Strong and honest provincial councils that can levy taxes and craft local solutions to local problems would vastly improve the quality of life, and fewer Haitians would feel compelled to move to Port-au-Prince to seek their fortune—and build slums that pancake in earthquakes.

We need constructive answers to these big questions now. Good ideas are coming in from people like Paul Farmer, who's run Haiti's Partners in Health for years and who is now Bill Clinton's deputy at the United Nations. They're coming in from Haitian survivors in all rubble-strewn walks of life. New paradigms are also being offered by hardheaded analysts like Jocelyn McCalla, a Haitian who consults on government, immigration and business affairs, and from economists who have turned their view toward global poverty eradication. Not all their ideas are useful or plausible, and everything will be difficult to implement in the months immediately following such a catastrophe. But people like this are trying to find a way toward rebuilding Haiti, and building it better.

You have a choice in a situation like the one we're confronting. You can sit back in your chair and fondle your nihilism, or you can try to be original and work toward something creative. People like Brooks, Applebaum and Robertson are tapping into something very dark and atavistic indeed. Those who read them or hear them are bound to ask themselves, "What is it about Haiti?" Some will shrug and, like Applebaum, turn away. In a moment of such death and destruction, that's not the reaction one should hope to elicit.

AMY WILENTZ

Amy Wilentz, author of The Rainy Season: Haiti Since Duvalier, *teaches journalism at the University of California, Irvine.*

Calvin Trillin, Deadline Poet

Pat Robertson and Rush Limbaugh on Haiti

A pact with the Devil's what Robertson says
Has caused folks in Haiti distress.
If they had consulted Pat's Jesus instead,
They'd now be a smashing success.

And Rush says Obama's just scoring some points
With all of his darker-skinned backers.
We've already given to Haiti, Rush says:
Our taxes supported those slackers.

When listening to what the two of them spew,
These theories bizarre and rococo,
It's hard to decide who's racist and mean
And who just needs help 'cause he's loco.

The Love We Lost

A lot happens in a year, events ripe for exploration but athwart the deadline of a column scheduled to appear only six out of fifty-two weeks. Such was the case in 2009, and I had planned on reviewing The Year in Sex, plumbing the meaning of some of the bigger stories that slipped past, when fresh events intervened: *Vanity Fair* plastered its February cover with a portrait of Tiger Woods that blends classic beefcake with the essence of a police artist's perp drawing; and death came calling.

I'll get to death in a moment, but first the really morbid subject. That picture of Tiger, grim-faced and naked except for a ski cap, sums up the major sexual theme not just of the past year but

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of our time, the sexual being as offender. Tiger coerced no child, copped no plea, jumped no bail, whacked no white woman. It doesn't matter. He had merely to bust up the prison of his own image, and the black Escalade became the white Bronco, Tiger became "the new O.J.," with the difference that this time some people cheered domestic violence, wishing out loud that the club-wielding Elin had given her bloodied husband more of a beating.

When mere horn dogs can so easily acquire the tincture of criminality and whet the taste for punishment, it's clear that ordinary rules of judgment have been suspended. And so, plucking just a few headlines from the recent past, it cannot matter that Michael Jackson was acquitted of child molestation, since he was frequently remembered in death as a pedophile. It cannot matter what happened all those years ago between Roman Polanski and Samantha Geimer in a mansion on Mulholland Drive, just as it cannot matter whether others who plead guilty to a sex charge really did it, or whether evidence to convict was nonsense, or whether the guilty serve their time. They can never "pay their debt to society." Guilt is the presumption, forever. One who pleads on the promise of a deal can no more realistically retract that plea than the ex-cons and wrongly accused can shed the label "sex offender." Martha Coakley says she still believes the Amiraults—whom she helped put away on preposterous charges of daycare horror and who were later vindicated—are guilty. The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court suggests it may not let other convictions stand on repressed memory alone but it has no problem doing so in the case of defrocked priest Paul Shanley (another prosecution initiated by Coakley), ignoring the reams of scientific research offered by the defense. And dozens of people who have done their time are still living under a bridge in Miami, quaking in the unwonted cold, because the city's residency requirements for sex offenders afford no other place for them. Perhaps the Supreme Court will feel the tug of constitutional duty and rule this year in *US v. Comstock* that the federal government may not authorize indefinite civil commitment of "sexually dangerous" persons beyond their prison term, as provided in the odious Adam Walsh Child Protection Act. But the definition of sexual danger has become endlessly elastic. Like the terrorist, the sex offender is a new category of human being. Fear will probably stick around a while.

Into this gloom, death comes as a rescuing angel, bearing memories of an erotic world that now seems a different dimension entirely. Teddy Pendergrass, a symbol of '70s soul who helped to shape that world, died January 13. He was only 59, not all that much older than kids like me in the 1970s, picking our way toward consciousness with little more than the culture as our guide. The newspaper obituaries all remembered him as a sexual icon, and for the women who attended his Ladies Only concerts, licking chocolate Teddy Bear lollipops and throwing panties onto the stage, he may have been mainly that. To me, he was a groove master and soul stirrer, a sexual educator when that was something I wouldn't have even recognized. "Wake up everybody," he sang with Harold Melvin & the Blue Notes, a song as much about living in your skin as in political time. Music was Teddy's text, and with it he taught us how to come into our nature, to feel not only the fire but also the texture of sensual things—the need in his voice, the lushness of Philadelphia sound, the mix of power and vulnerability that defined the sexual being as lover.

Teddy said his calling to secular music came at a Jackie Wilson concert in Philadelphia when a female fan straddled the singer, then on his back, and ground her hips to the rhythm of his song. The adolescent Teddy was bug-eyed. He harnessed that excitement in a mature voice that was deep and emotionally bare, and that carried up from radios on the street in spring through the windows of the city bus I took home from high school—*I miss you… If you don't know me by now…* It jousted with the sounds of Motown; with "TSOP" and the other hits from Gamble and Huff out of Philadelphia International; with Barry White and Earth, Wind and Fire, and the more liquidy tones of Al Green in songs produced out of Memphis at Hi Records by Willie Mitchell, the old soul genius who left this world a few days before Teddy.

Who knew then, feeling the groove riding through the black and Polish neighborhoods of Buffalo, that the antisex, anti-black, antigay, anti–loveandpeace backlash that would forge so much that is harsh and ugly today, were all in the works at that moment? Not a young white girl who understood only in the broadest strokes that the beat carrying from soul to funk and R&B to disco, the beat that made one dance, made one sigh, was a precarious beat of freedom.

In 1982 Teddy Pendergrass broke his neck when his Rolls Royce spun out of control and crashed. By then he had recorded five consecutive multiplatinum albums, the first black male singer to do so, and it was an easy thing to make a program of music following the full arc of love from first seduction ("Come Go With Me") to final heartbreak ("Another Love T.K.O.") just from his songs. His passenger, a transsexual M-F who'd worked as a prostitute, was treated for cuts and bruises. Teddy, 31, was paralyzed from the chest down. Every obituary I read said that the accident transformed him from sex symbol to figure of sympathy or, at best, inspiration. I thought something similar at the time. But I was stupid and the obit writers still are, because anyone who followed the music and the man should have learned a few more sexual lessons from him.

He had fashioned himself from the start as an object of erotic interest because he sang as if he understood a few things about love, about making love and giving love, sometimes begging for it; about the sexiness of a brain and human transactions more intricate than the missionary position. Paralysis forced him to discover a new voice—less powerful, more supple, still seductive. It forced him to discover new ways to make love, because he believed in singing from experience. He reinsinuated himself into women's sexual fantasies because he didn't stop embodying his sexuality. At his last concerts, about eight years ago, they still threw panties onto the stage. Watching him sing "Close the Door" from a wheelchair after Al Green stomps and shouts a version of "Let's Stay Together" on a 1993 video from the Apollo Theater, I know whose lap I would crawl up into. And maybe somewhere right now some kid is screwing a blue or red light bulb into a lamp socket, waiting for a lover, pulling Teddy from the old-school pile and, nervously, hoping to get lucky. JoANN WYPIJEWSKI

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Katha Pollitt

Free Nazia Quazi

In most countries, a woman in her mid-20s is legally an adult. And in most countries, foreigners are free to leave when they like. In its flagrant rejection of these two principles, Saudi Arabia is unique, and that is a big problem for 24-year-old Nazia Quazi.

For more than two years Nazia, an IT specialist who graduated from the University of Ottawa and holds dual Canadian-Indian citizenship, has been trying to leave Riyadh and go home to Canada. Her troubles began on November 23, 2007, when she entered Saudi Arabia with her parents on a visitor's visa. In Saudi Arabia, foreign visitors must have a sponsor, a local man who handles their paperwork. Nazia's sponsor is her father, Quazi Malik Abdul Gaffar, an Indian citizen who has worked in Saudi Arabia for many years. At some point Nazia's father clandestinely switched her visitor's visa to a more permanent visa—one that requires that he, as her sponsor, approve her exit visa. This he refuses to do. No exit visa, no departure. Worse, Nazia says he has confiscated both her Indian and Canadian passports and all her identity documents—driver's license, health card, credit cards and so on—and refuses to return them. She is trapped.

Nazia's father is not only her sponsor; he is also her *mahram*, or guardian, the male relative who in the Saudi system controls nearly every moment of a woman's life. As detailed in a 2008 Human Rights Watch report, under this system a woman must seek her *mahram*'s permission to go to school, travel abroad, marry, open a bank account, hold a job, rent an apartment or even have elective surgery. (In June the Saudi government told the UN Human Rights Council that the guardianship system no longer exists, but HRW and the Saudi newspaper *Al-Watan* confirm that it does.) In effect, it makes women children for life—there are middle-aged Saudi women who are under the legal control of their own sons. Nazia's father thus has not only been able to force his daughter, through the sponsorship system, to remain in Riyadh; as her *mahram* he has total control of her life while she is there—even though neither Nazia nor her father is a Saudi citizen.

Nazia alleges that her parents, especially her father, have been physically and verbally abusive to her for years; a friend of hers told me in phone calls and e-mails that Nazia described various such incidents when she was living in Canada. In Saudi Arabia her situation has grown worse: in July 2008, she says, her father threatened her with a knife, saying he would kill her if she tried to leave. She also says that in order to break up her relationship with her boyfriend, whom her parents regard as insufficiently Muslim and too modern, her parents tried to force her to marry a stranger they had chosen for her. Not only her father but also her mother and her two brothers, both students in Canadian universities, are opposed to giving Nazia her freedom.

Nazia's passport problem is unusually complicated because of her dual citizenship. She was able to obtain an emergency Indian passport certificate, which is good for six months, but the Indian Embassy regards her father's withholding of the exit visa as a family matter and will not intervene. She applied for a new Canadian passport this past November, but since her father seized her IDs, all she has is a photocopy of her original passport, and embassy officials have told her this may not be enough. In any case, she's been told by the Canadian Embassy and the Saudi passport office she would still need an exit visa. Nazia has contacted the Saudi Human Rights Commission (HRC), a government agency, but so far it has not indicated that it will be able to help her. (That these bureaucracies are so slow and convoluted adds to the frustration, of course. I've spent two weeks phoning the Indian and Canadian embassies and the Saudi HRC, invariably to be told, on the rare occasions when I reach an actual human being, that I am speaking to the wrong person.)

The good news is that Human Rights Watch has taken up Nazia's case. It has sent a letter to the Canadian Embassy in Riyadh urging it to protect Nazia and help her return home, and HRW's Toronto committee is deluging members of Parliament with letters on her behalf. Nazia is, after all, a Canadian citizen, and Canada should be as concerned about her rights and safety as about any Canadian held against her will in a foreign land. It should issue her a new passport immediately and whisk her out of Saudi Arabia, exit visa or no exit visa, because of the ongoing threat to her safety and denial of her basic human rights—rights that the Saudi government agreed to protect when it signed the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 2001. Nazia's case offers the Canadian government a chance to redeem itself after its shocking refusal this past October to help Nathalie Morin, a Canadian living in Saudi Arabia whose husband refuses to let her and her children out of the country. Nazia's case is easier, in a way, because she is single and no children are involved. But more than one person I've talked with has suggested that the fact that the Quazis are Muslim is relevant: the embassy in Riyadh doesn't want to get involved in what it apparently views as a Muslim family dispute.

At one level, it is that. Nazia's father won't take my calls, but I've spoken with her older brother, who declined to comment for this story, and with her employer, a friend of her father's who claims he is trying to broker a solution. To them the fact that Nazia is a 24-year-old college graduate is irrelevant, as are her feelings, her fears, her wishes and her rights. What matters is her father's disapproval of her boyfriend.

But that's a problem for the Quazis. It's not a reason for Canada to allow Nazia to be deprived of her rights. How far have women come if a democratic, secular country like Canada permits a father to imprison his adult daughter in the cage of Saudi laws? ■

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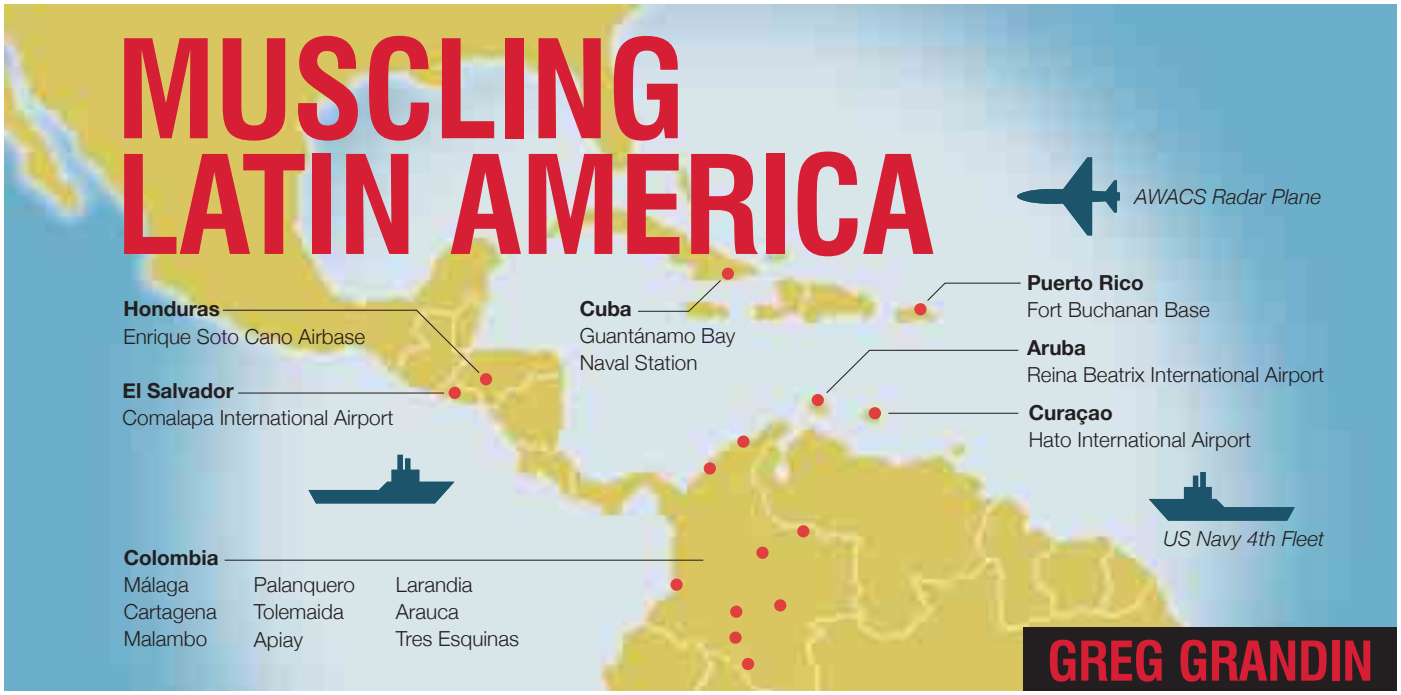

In September Ecuador's president, Rafael Correa, delivered on an electoral promise and refused to renew Washington's decade-old, rent-free lease on an air base outside the Pacific coast town of Manta, which for the past ten years has served as the Pentagon's main South American outpost. The eviction was a serious effort to fulfill the call of Ecuador's new Constitution to promote "universal disarmament" and oppose the "imposition" of military bases of "some states in the territory of others." It was also one of the most important victories for the global demilitarization movement, loosely organized around the International Network for the Abolition of Foreign Military Bases, since protests forced the US Navy to withdraw from Vieques, Puerto Rico, in 2003. Correa, though, couldn't resist an easy joke. "We'll renew the lease," he quipped, "if the US lets us set up a base in Miami."

Funny. Then Washington answered with a show of force: take away one, we'll grab seven. In late October the United States and Colombia signed an agreement granting the Pentagon use of seven military bases, along with an unlimited number of as yet unspecified "facilities and locations." They add to Washington's already considerable military presence in Colombia, as well as in Central America and the Caribbean.

Responding to criticism from South America on the Colombian deal, the White House insists it merely formalizes existing military cooperation between the two countries under Plan Colombia and will not increase the offensive capabilities of the US Southern Command (Southcom). The Pentagon says otherwise, writing in its 2009 budget request that it needed funds to upgrade one of the bases to conduct "full spectrum operations throughout South America" to counter, among other threats, "anti-U.S. governments" and to "expand expeditionary warfare capability." That ominous language, since scrubbed from the budget document, might be a case of hyping the threat to justify spending during austere times. But the Obama administration's decision to go forward with the bases does accelerate a dangerous trend in US hemispheric policy.

In recent years, Washington has experienced a fast erosion of its influence in South America, driven by the rise of Brazil, the region's left turn, the growing influence of China and Venezuela's use of oil revenue to promote a multipolar diplomacy. Broad social movements have challenged efforts by US- and Canadian-based companies to expand extractive industries like mining, biofuels, petroleum and logging. Last year in Peru, massive indigenous protests forced the repeal of laws aimed at opening large swaths of the Amazon to foreign timber, mining and oil corporations, and throughout the region similar activism continues to place Latin America in the vanguard of the anti-corporate and anti-militarist global democracy movement.

Such challenges to US authority have led the Council on Foreign Relations to pronounce the Monroe Doctrine "obsolete." But that doctrine, which for nearly two centuries has been used to justify intervention from Patagonia to the Rio Grande, has not expired so much as slimmed down, with Barack Obama's administration disappointing potential regional allies by continuing to promote a volatile mix of militarism and free-trade orthodoxy in a corridor running from Mexico to Colombia.

The anchor of this condensed Monroe Doctrine is Plan Colombia. Heading into the eleventh year of what was planned to phase out after five, Washington's multibillion-dollar military aid package has failed to stem the flow of illegal narcotics into the United States. More Andean coca was synthesized into cocaine in 2008 than in 1998, and the drug's retail price is significantly lower today, adjusted for inflation, than it was a decade ago.

But Plan Colombia is not really about drugs; it is the Latin American edition of GCOIN, or Global Counterinsurgency, the current term used by strategists to downplay the religious and ideological associations of George W. Bush's bungled "global war on terror" and focus on a more modest program

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of extending state rule over "lawless" or "ungoverned spaces," in GCOIN parlance.

Starting around 2006, with the occupation of Iraq going badly, Plan Colombia became the counterinsurgent marquee, celebrated by strategists as a successful application of the "clear, hold and build" sequence favored by theorists like Gen. David Petraeus. Its lessons have been incorporated into the curriculums of many US military colleges and cited by the Joint Chiefs of Staff as a model for Afghanistan. Not only did the Colombian military, with support from Washington, weaken the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC), Latin America's oldest and strongest insurgency, but according to the Council on Foreign Relations, it secured a state presence in "many regions previously controlled by illegal armed groups, reestablishing elected governments, building and rebuilding public infrastructure, and affirming the rule of law." Plan Colombia, in other words, offered not just a road map to success but success itself. "Colombia is what Iraq should eventually look like," wrote *Atlantic* contributor Robert Kaplan, "in our best dreams."

Plan Colombia did not so much entail an assault on the paramilitaries as create a venue through which they could become the state itself.

Traditionally in most counterinsurgencies, the "clear" stage entails a plausibly deniable reliance on death-squad terror—think Operation Phoenix in Vietnam or the Mano Blanca in El Salvador. The Bush administration was in office by the time Plan Colombia became fully operational, and according to the *Washington Post*'s Scott Wilson, it condoned the activities of right-wing paramilitaries, loosely organized as the United Self-Defense Forces, or AUC in Spanish. "The argument at the time, always made privately," Wilson writes, "was that the paramilitaries"—responsible for most of Colombia's political murders—"provided the force that the army did not yet have." This was followed by the "hold" phase, a massive paramilitary land grab. Fraud and force—"sell, or your widow will," goes many an opening bid—combined with indiscriminate fumigation, which poisoned farmlands, to turn millions of peasants into refugees. Paramilitaries, along with their *narcotraficante* allies, now control about 10 million acres, roughly half of the country's most fertile land.

After parts of the countryside had been pacified, it was time to "build" the state. Technically, the United States considers the AUC to be a terrorist organization, part of the narcoterrorist triptych, along with FARC and the narcos, that Southcom is pledged to fight. But Plan Colombia did not so much entail an assault on the paras—aside from the most recalcitrant and expendable—as create a venue through which, by defining public policy as perpetual war, they could become the state itself.

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Under the smokescreen of a government-brokered amnesty, condemned by national and international human rights groups for institutionalizing impunity, paras have taken control of hundreds of municipal governments, establishing what Colombian social scientist León Valencia calls "true local dictatorships," consolidating their property seizures and deepening their ties to narcos, landed elites and politicians. The country's sprawling intelligence apparatus is infiltrated by this death squad/narco combine, as is its judiciary and Congress, where more than forty deputies from the governing party are under investigation for ties to the AUC.

Plan Colombia, in other words, has financed the opposite of what is taking place in neighboring Ecuador, Bolivia and Venezuela, where progressive movements are fitfully trying to "refound" their societies along more inclusive lines. In place of the left's "participatory democracy," Colombian President Álvaro Uribe offers "democratic security," a social compact whereby those who submit to the new order are promised safe, even yuppified cities and secure highways, while oppositional civil society suffers intimidation and murder. Colombia remains the hands-down worst repressor in Latin America. More than 500 trade unionists have been executed since Uribe took office. In recent years 195 teachers have been assassinated, and not one arrest has been made for the killings. And the military stands accused of murdering more than 2,000 civilians and then dressing their bodies in guerrilla uniforms in order to prove progress against the FARC.

It also seems that many right-wing warriors are not cut out for the quiet life offered by the *Paz Uribista*. The Bogotá-based think tank Nuevo Arco Iris reports mini civil wars breaking out among "heirs of the AUC" for control of local spoils. Yet Plan Colombia continues to be hailed. Flying home from a recent Bogotá-hosted GCOIN conference, the former head of Southcom wrote on his blog that Colombia is a "must see" tourist spot, having "come a long, long way in controlling a deep-seated insurgency just over two hours flight from Miami—and we could learn a great deal from their success."

Seen in light of his escalation in Afghanistan, Obama's support for the Colombian base deal endorses the kind of elastic threat assessment that has turned the "long war" against radical Islam into a wide war where ultimate victory will be a world absent of crime—"counterinsurgencies without end," as Andrew Bacevich recently put it.

Shortly after the fall of Baghdad, Washington tried to conscript all of Latin America in the fight. In October 2003 it pushed the Organization of American States to include corruption, undocumented migration, money laundering, natural and man-made disasters, AIDS, environmental degradation, poverty and computer hacking alongside terrorism and drugs as security threats. In 2004 an Army War College strategist proposed "exporting Plan Colombia" to all of Latin America, which Donald Rumsfeld tried to do later that year at a regional defense ministers meeting in Ecuador. He was rebuffed; countries like Chile and Brazil refuse to subordinate their militaries,

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as they did during the cold war, to US command.

So the United States retrenched, setting about to fight the wide war in a narrower place, creating a security corridor running from Colombia through Central America to Mexico. With a hodgepodge of treaties and projects, such as the International Law Enforcement Academy and the Merida Initiative, Obama is continuing the policies of his predecessors, spending millions to integrate the region's military, policy, intelligence and even, through Patriot Act–like legislation, judicial systems. This is best thought of as an effort to enlarge the radius of Plan Colombia to create a unified, supra-national counterinsurgent infrastructure. Since there is "fusion" among Latin American terrorists and criminals, goes a typical argument in a recent issue of the Pentagon's *Joint Force Quarterly*, "countering the threat will require fusion on our part."

At the same time, schemes like the Mesoamerican Integration and Development Project are using World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank financing to synchronize the highway, communication and energy networks of Mexico, Central America and Colombia, blending the North American and Central American free-trade treaties and, eventually, the pending Colombian Free Trade Agreement into a seamless whole. Thomas Shannon, Bush's top envoy to Latin America and Obama's ambassador to Brazil, called these initiatives "armoring NAFTA."

"Fusion" is a good word for this integration, since the melding of neoliberal economics and counterinsurgent diplomacy is explosive. One effect of Plan Colombia has been to diversify the violence and corruption endemic to the cocaine trade, with Central American and Mexican cartels and military factions taking over export of the drug to the United States. This cycle of violence is reinforced by the rapid spread of mining, hydroelectric, biofuel and petroleum operations, which wreak havoc on local ecosystems, poisoning land and water, and by the opening of national markets to US agroindustry, which destroys local economies. The ensuing displacement either creates the assorted criminal threats the wide war is waged to counter or provokes protest, which is dealt with by the avengers the wide war empowers.

Throughout Latin America, a new generation of community activists continues to advance the global democracy movement that was largely derailed in the United States by 9/11. They provide important leadership to US environmental, indigenous, religious and human rights organizations, working to develop a comprehensive and sustainable social-justice agenda. But in the Mexico-Colombia corridor, activists are confronting what might be called bio-paramilitarism, a revival of the old anticommunist death-squad/planter alliance, energized by the current intensification of extractive and agricultural industries. In Colombia, Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities fighting paras who have seized land to cultivate African palm for ethanol production have been evicted by mercenaries and the military [see Teo Ballvé, "The Dark Side of Plan Colombia," June 15, 2009]. From Panama to Mexico, rural protesters are likewise targeted. In the Salvadoran department of Cabañas, for instance, death squads have executed four leaders—three in December—who opposed the Vancouver-based Pacific Rim Mining Company's efforts to dig a gold mine in their community.

And in Honduras, human rights organizations say palm planters have recruited forty members of Colombia's AUC as private security following the June overthrow of President Manuel Zelaya. That coup was at least partly driven by Zelaya's alliance with liberation-theologian priests and other environmental activists protesting mining and biofuel-induced deforestation. Just a month before his overthrow, Zelaya—in response to an investigation that charged Goldcorp, another Vancouver-based company, with contaminating Honduras's Siria Valley—introduced a law that would have required community approval before new mining concessions were granted; it also banned open-pit mines and the use of cyanide and mercury. That legislation died with his ouster. Zelaya also tried to break the dependent relationship whereby the region exports oil to US refineries only to buy back gasoline and diesel at monopolistic prices; he joined Petrocaribe—the alliance that provides cheap Venezuelan oil to member countries—and signed a competitive contract with Conoco Phillips. This move earned him the ire of Exxon and Chevron, which dominate Central America's fuel market. Since the controversial November 29 presidential elections, Honduras has largely fallen off the media's radar, even as the pace of repression has accelerated. Since the State Department's recognition of that vote, about ten opposition leaders have been executed—roughly half of the number killed in the previous five months.

Obama is continuing his predecessors' policies, enlarging Plan Colombia to create a supra-national counterinsurgency infrastructure.

It didn't have to be this way. Latin America does not present a serious military danger. No country is trying to acquire a nuclear weapon or cut off access to vital resources. Venezuela continues to sell oil to the United States. Obama is popular in Latin America, and most governments, including those on the left, would have welcomed a demilitarized diplomacy that downplays terrorism and prioritizes reducing poverty and inequality—exactly the kind of "new multilateralism" Obama called for in his presidential campaign.

Yet because Latin America presents no real threat, there is no incentive to confront entrenched interests that oppose a modernization of hemispheric relations. "Obama," said a top-level Argentine diplomat despairingly, "has decided that Latin America isn't worth it. He gave it to the right."

The White House could have worked with the Organization of American States to restore democracy in Honduras. Instead, after months of mixed signals, Obama capitulated to Senate Republicans and endorsed a murderous regime. Washington could try to advance a new hemispheric economic policy, balancing Latin American calls for equity and development with corporate profits. But the Democratic Party remains Wall

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Street's party, and shortly after taking office Obama abandoned his pledge to renegotiate NAFTA. With Washington's blessing the IMF continues to push Latin American countries to liberalize their economies. In December Arturo Valenzuela, Obama's assistant secretary of state for the Western Hemisphere, caused a scandal in Argentina when he urged the country to return to the investment climate of 1996—which would be something like Buenos Aires calling on the United States to reinflate the recent Greenspan bubble.

The Obama administration could reconsider Plan Colombia and the Pentagon's base agreement. But that would mean rethinking a longer, multi-decade, bipartisan, trillion-dollars-and-counting "war on drugs," and Obama has other wars to extricate himself from—or not, as the case may be.

Unable or unwilling to make concessions on these and other issues important to Latin America—normalizing relations with Cuba, for instance, or advancing immigration reform—the White House is adopting an increasingly antagonistic posture. Hillary Clinton, following a visit to Brazil by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, warned Latin Americans to "think twice" about "the consequences" of engagement with Iran. Bolivia denounced the comments as a threat, Brazil canceled a scheduled meeting between its foreign minister and Valenzuela, and even Argentina, no friend of Iran, grew irritated. As the Argentine diplomat quoted above told me, "The Obama administration would never talk to European countries like that."

Insiders report that high-level State Department officials are furious at Brazilian president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who in recent months has been as steadfast as Venezuela's Hugo Chávez in opposing Washington's ongoing militarism, particularly the White House's attempt to legitimize the Honduran coup. Having successfully thwarted a similar destabilization campaign against Bolivian president Evo Morales in 2008, Brazil, according to Lula's top foreign-policy adviser, Marco Aurélio Garcia, is worried that Obama's Honduras policy is "introducing the 'theory of the preventive coup' in Latin America"—by which Garcia means an extension of Bush's preventive war doctrine.

In a region that has not seen a major interstate war for more than seventy years, Brazil is concerned that the Pentagon's Colombian base deal is escalating tensions between Colombia and Venezuela. The US media have focused on Chávez's warning that the "winds of war" were blowing through the region, but Brazil's foreign minister, Celso Amorim, places blame for the crisis squarely on Washington. Chávez, Amorim said, "had backed away from that statement. To talk about war—a word which should never be uttered—is one thing. Another is the practical and objective issues of the Colombian bases.… If Iran or Russia were to establish a base in Venezuela, that would also worry us."

There are also indications that the White House is hoping an upcoming round of presidential elections in South America will restore pliable governments. On a recent trip to Buenos Aires, for instance, Valenzuela met with a number of extreme right-wing politicians but not with moderate opposition leaders, drawing criticism from center-left President Cristina Fernández's government. In January a right-wing billionaire, Sebastián Piñera, was elected president of Chile. And if Lula's Workers Party loses Brazil's October presidential vote, as polls indicate is a possibility, the Andean left will be increasingly isolated, caught between the Colombia-Mexico security corridor to the north and administrations more willing to accommodate Washington's interests to the south. Twenty-first-century containment for twenty-first-century socialism. Fidel Castro, normally an optimist, has recently speculated that before Obama finishes his presidency, "there will be six to eight rightist governments in Latin America."

Until that happens, the United States is left with a rump Monroe Doctrine and an increasingly threatening stance toward a region it used to call its own. ■

West Coast Wasteland

Savage budget cuts and political dysfunction are tearing California's social infrastructure apart.

by SASHA ABRAMSKY

In the pretty northern Los Angeles suburb of Glendale, the staff of VMH (formerly Verdugo Mental Health) go to work in a brand-new building. It is elegantly constructed in Spanish colonial style, and when you wander the corridors you can still sniff out that fresh-paint odor coming from some of the cream-colored, plushly carpeted counseling rooms. On the surface, it all looks good. Spend a few hours at the clinic, however, and you realize that there's something grievously amiss. The rooms, even during prime counseling hours, are almost all unoccupied.

VMH has provided counseling and medication to impoverished children and adults since 1957. But in August, shortly after the new facility opened, the clinic lost most of its funding for adult services when the state and county yanked their dollars, triggering huge matching-fund losses from the federal government. Eighty percent of the counseling staff, including nearly all of the site's adult counselors, were laid off. Kids still receive some counseling, but the walls of the rooms in which they are seen by staff are bare—the clinic ran out of funds before it could decorate them—and the doors have paper signs taped to them instead of brass plaques.

Nowadays, VMH's adult clients are treated exclusively with medication. And the indigent mentally ill—whose treatment had been paid for by LA County, which in turn received money from the state—are turned away at the door. Many of them end up

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sleeping on park benches near the clinic. "These are the chronically mentally ill," says psychologist Janie Strasner glumly, "who will end up being the raving lunatics on the street."

What makes this all the more troubling is that Glendale isn't an outstandingly poor neighborhood, Los Angeles isn't a poor city and California certainly isn't a poor state. And yet something is seriously wrong with the organism that is California. The state's savage budget cuts—$26 billion in 2009, an expected shortfall over the next year that could reach $20 billion—now serve as anti-stimulus to the federal stimulus package. Its basic educational, public safety and social service infrastructure is crumbling. As a self-sustaining political system, as a set of relationships between local and state governments, as a revenue-raising and revenue-spending mechanism, California is deeply damaged. And the impact of that damage is hitting an awful lot of people awfully hard.

The state's unemployment rate stands at more than 12 percent, and in some poorer counties it's in the 25 percent range. In Los Angeles, that number is 12.2 percent. "It boggles the mind," says LA's mayor, Antonio Villaraigosa. "Not since the Depression have we had numbers this bad." To make matters worse, in an attempt to slow the state's fiscal implosion, halfway through 2009 Sacramento forcibly borrowed billions of dollars from city coffers statewide. "They took our community redevelopment dollars that are capital we need to create jobs and housing in this town," the mayor argues.

MATT BLACK

Homeless in Fresno: Guillermo Torrez ended up on the streets after he lost his construction job and his family's home was foreclosed.

The network of public universities, long the country's most prestigious state-supported higher education system, is wilting. The state's schools, starved of money from a combination of thirty-year-old local property-tax revolts and the more recent budget implosion, are rapidly sinking into what can only charitably be called mediocrity.

There's a *Mad Max* feel to daily life in many neighborhoods. The Central Valley has a swath of cities whose home foreclosure rates rank in the top ten in the country. Friends looking to buy a home in a poor part of Sacramento tell me of foreclosed houses stripped of their copper wires, their toilets, their pipes, even their drywall. An ex-student reports visiting homes in which furious foreclosed owners and evicted tenants have urinated and defecated on the carpeting, abandoned pets to starve, left kitchens filled with rotting food. Sure, you can buy these properties for next to nothing, but you'll have to bring in the biohazard squads before you can safely occupy them.

University departments looking to pinch pennies are removing their professors' office phones. Judges in some counties have donated a percentage of their salaries back to the courts so that the courts will have enough money to stay open. And on furlough Fridays, downtown Sacramento—the capital city of the world's eighth-largest economy—is practically a ghost town. The restaurants are empty, the streets quiet. Nobody's at work.

Why this has happened, how the mess can be cleaned up, how big-picture fixes to a discredited political machine can be implemented—well, that's all up for debate. Political consensus is as rare a commodity in California these days as baseball-sized gold nuggets were after the forty-niners had picked the mountains clean. Practically the only thing conservatives and liberals agree on in Sacramento is that the decision-making system has stalled and that the state leadership's ability to implement long-term strategic plans in the face of economic crisis has been corroded in recent years. California, historically the country's most populous, wealthiest, most dynamic state, has become chronically anxious about its future. Its citizens have grown distrustful of those who govern them, increasingly aware that ineptitude is making a bad economic situation worse. Recent polling suggests only 13 percent of voters approve of the job their state legislators are doing.

Some residents want tax reform—though Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's tax reform commission recently issued recommendations that appear, in their chilly reception, to have been stillborn. Others want to tweak term limits; curb the sprawling, open-ended initiative process; introduce open primaries; further cut government services; even hold a constitutional convention to rewrite the basic governing mechanisms of the state. Few, though, deny the storm clouds overhead.

"The outlook for next year and the year after is worse," says veteran California observer and journalist Peter Schrag, over a BLT lunch at a casual-but-chic cafe in the Berkeley foothills. "The stimulus money goes away. The tax increases [passed in February 2009 after weeks of acrimonious debate] expire. If we're up shit creek now, we're going to be further up shit creek two years from now." Since the state, unlike localities, cannot declare bankruptcy, if its tax revenues continue to wilt it will have no choice but to dramatically scale back its spending on big-ticket items such as education, healthcare and prisons.

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Recognizing these realities, Schwarzenegger recently suggested rewriting the Constitution to ensure that the state never spends less than 10 percent of its general fund on higher education or more than 7 percent on corrections. But he didn't propose limiting what sorts of offenses would trigger a prison term; instead, he suggested cutting costs by wholesale prison privatization—a proposal almost certain to be defeated in the legislature.

Schrag looks out on his state and sees an eroding sense of common destiny—a great experiment gone awry, a place where racial and economic groupings are retreating into their own corners, where the social bonds that give people confidence in their futures are disintegrating. California's disarray is, for him, a psychological crisis as much as an economic one. If things get bad enough, he wonders aloud, "will there be some restoration of the public sense? Is there a point at which people will basically begin to develop a sense that something has to be done? And that could go in various directions. It could go in the direction of a furious backlash against immigrants, or a realization that we better do something else—tax millionaires, oil companies."

Lenny Goldberg, an economist at the left-leaning California Tax Reform Association, believes California's crisis is about a failure of will: the money's there, Goldberg says—even during a recession as deep as the current one, California's is still a nearly $2 trillion economy—but the willingness to access it through a viable tax structure is absent. Since it takes only a bare majority of state legislators to lower taxes but a two-thirds supermajority to increase them—a side provision to Proposition 13, the 1978 ballot initiative better known for limiting property-tax rates—the result, he says disdainfully, is a "roach motel." Once tax loopholes crawl in, they're all but impossible to remove. The GOP in California, long a minority in the legislature, has just enough muscle in Sacramento to hold the budget and tax process hostage to its no-new-taxes agenda.

The GOP in California, long a minority in the state legislature, has just enough muscle to hold the budget and tax process hostage.

Not surprisingly, Jon Coupal, the perfectly coiffed Tim Robbins look-alike president of the conservative Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association (named after the anti-tax crusader who led the Prop 13 campaign), has a different take. For Coupal, tax increases to fill some of the holes in California's budget "would be a nonstarter." To him, it's all about waste, government inefficiency and a decades-long flirtation with "an entitlement mentality—whether it's healthcare, whether it's a free education. People have lost sight of the one thing government should do as a first priority—it's to preserve liberty." Downsize the state, move core social service functions to the private sector, and California's cascading budget crisis could be controlled.

Betwixt these donkeys and elephants, never the twain shall meet. Moreover, because of an extraordinarily restrictive term-limits law passed by voters in 1990, legislators in Sacramento no longer have the time to develop expertise about how their state works. As a result, few legislators in either party accumulate the confidence born of experience to challenge special interests. As Jim Brulte, a onetime GOP leader in both the State Assembly and Senate and a vocal critic of the restrictions of the term-limits law, explained at the Getting to Reform conference in mid-October, state leaders can never do what redbaiting Nixon did: "go to China." They can't challenge their constituencies to think outside the box.

In the case of the GOP, those interests tend to be rigidly anti-tax but somewhat fuzzy on exactly what programs to cut to balance California's budget. In the case of the Democrats, they tend to favor higher spending but don't necessarily support tax hikes to cover those bills. In the meantime, as momentum for reform slowly builds and voters' anger intensifies, the state continues its slow bleed.

Californians have long wanted to have their cake and eat it too, using the initiative process to mandate generous levels of spending on specific programs but using that same process to limit localities' ability to raise property taxes and state legislators' ability to raise state revenues. The result? California is increasingly reliant on borrowing, increasingly at the mercy of the credit markets and thus increasingly vulnerable to crises such as the seize-up of those credit markets in 2008.

Why does California have the country's lowest bond rating? "Because of our political and fiscal system," Goldberg believes. "We're so tied in knots, the market doesn't believe we can get a solution to our problems. It's the market saying, Your political system is really fucked up."

"Since '78," explains Tim Hodson, executive director of California studies at California State University, Sacramento, "we've developed a political culture that believes you can have world-class public services without having to pay for them. We need to get control of ballot-box budgeting."

Voters recognize the state's dysfunction and the concomitant need for reform. But recent Field Poll data show the electorate to be deeply resistant to the sorts of reforms that would help get the state back on its feet. There's not only no will to modify the residential property tax constraints imposed by Prop 13; the majority also opposes a "split roll" property tax that would allow for commercial properties to be taxed at a higher rate. There's no support for reining in the initiative process or modifying term limits. A clear majority also oppose ending the two-thirds vote requirement needed to raise taxes or pass state budgets. And a majority believes—implausibly, according to almost all fiscal experts who have studied the issue—that the state could plug a $25 billion deficit simply by eliminating government waste and fraud.

Seeing which way the winds are blowing here, ex-governor Jerry Brown, who wants to cap his career by getting elected as governor once more—and who, at least for now, is seen as the front-runner among Democratic hopefuls—has come out in opposition to reforming Prop 13 and in support of a "simpler" (read: "flatter") tax system. On the Republican side, former eBay CEO Meg Whitman and other high-profile

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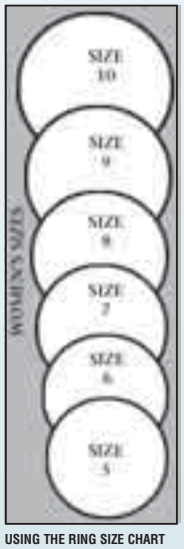

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would-be candidates have come out against any tax increases and any constitutional reforms that would eliminate the two-thirds requirement.

It's a Catch-22: voters know the system is breeding paralysis and needs to be reformed, but as long as the dysfunction continues to send legislators' reputations swirling down the toilet, those same voters are unwilling to cede more power to the legislature or limit their ability to make policy on the hoof via the initiative process. This, in turn, leads gubernatorial candidates to circumscribe their reform ambitions in order to curry favor with a disillusioned electorate. And so the circle of dysfunction-suspicion-dysfunction remains unbroken. "You have to restore voters' trust in government to make good decisions," argues Jean Ross, executive director of the California Budget Project. "They see declining public services and say, 'Why would I give these people more authority?' But until they do, we're going to see cuts in everything from public schools to the DMV."

September 24, the first day of classes at many of the UC campuses, was a cloudless, blazing hot day in the college town of Davis. It was also a day when many classes weren't going to be held. Across the UC system, faculty and students were walking out to protest the cascading series of budget cuts and fee hikes triggered by the state's reducing its commitment to the public universities by many hundreds of millions of dollars.

"Educate! Agitate! Organize!" were emblazoned on many protesters' T-shirts. "Respect the unions, bargain now," read the UPTE CWA 9119 local's banners.

Since Mario Savio set the bar for impromptu student speeches at Berkeley in December 1964, university protests in California have had that certain *frisson*, that sense that maybe, just maybe, someone else will come along who can speak as eloquently and passionately as he did. It never happens, but that doesn't stop them from trying. A young man who identified himself as a TA in the physics departments told the crowd that students and faculty alike had to stand up and resist. There was, he concluded, power in this teachable moment.

The crowd agreed. Shortly afterward, thousands of them set off on a long march around campus, to the administration building and then to the chancellor's residence. "Whose university? Our university!" they called and responded. "Whose university? Our university!"

Of course, that's only true if the general public agrees—including the 87.5 percent of the state's high school graduates who don't qualify for a University of California education. It's only true if a new consensus can be forged that channels enough tax dollars to the state to keep these vaunted public institutions

Standing Up for Change

Faced with a collapsing social infrastructure and a government that is failing to meet the basic needs of its residents, a growing number of Californians are organizing to develop solutions. The campaigns are wide-ranging, but they all share a sense that things can't get much worse and a belief that major changes are within reach.

Constitutional Convention. John Grubb, campaign director for a coalition called Repair California, says support for a constitutional convention is running at more than 70 percent. "We think this is the only chance for reform out there, because people have so little trust now in the other mechanisms," Grubb says. Its goals are backed by progressive groups like Common Cause, the New America Foundation and the Courage Campaign; civil rights organizations like the Southwest Voter Registration Education Project have also indicated their interest. In late October, Repair California filed language for two ballots on the issue with the state's attorney general. If the ballots are certified and then passed by voters, they would mandate that a convention be convened by May 2011 and that its recommendations be voted on by the 2012 general election.

Budget and Tax Reform. Most progressive analysts, including groups such as the California Budget Project, believe that without reforming the way California manages its finances the state will only stumble from one crisis to the next. Polls show that voters are reluctant to raise taxes or rein in the initiative process in isolation (some argue that such reforms will only be approved in the context of a broad rewriting of the constitution). But with the public up in arms about cuts to an already slashed-to-the-bone school system, there is some support for a so-called "split roll" property tax, whereby commercial property taxes are permitted to float upward to reflect the market value of those properties. "We are not the nation's future if we continue to dismantle what was the best public school and best public university system in the country," argues CBP executive director Jean Ross.

Term Limits. Even though a majority opposes reforming the state's strict term-limits law, serious observers think that public opinion is actually somewhat up for grabs on this issue. In LA, the Chamber of Commerce has gotten so concerned by the failures of state leaders to balance the budget that it is allying with a coalition of trade unions to push for change on this front. The likely compromise: a law that allows politicians to serve up to twelve years in either house but that, unlike the present system, prevents them from switching from one house to the other when they are termed out.

Electoral Reform. The Monterey-based group Reform for Change is leading the charge to build public support for changes in how elections are conducted—particularly for open primaries and new methods of redistricting that would make elections more competitive.

Universities. Campuses across the state have seen a wave of protests and building occupations—some led by students, others by faculty and/or unions representing staff—against the massive cuts to, and the de facto privatization of, the state's higher education infrastructure. On March 4 an array of unions and faculty and student groups will protest around California. —S.A.

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Dr. Roberta H. Anding is a registered dietitian and Director of Sports Nutrition and a clinical dietitian at Baylor College of Medicine and Texas Children's Hospital. Among her many awards are the Texas Distinguished Dietitian Award and the Texas Dietetic Association Media Award.

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afloat. And unfortunately, that consensus isn't emerging.

A few weeks after the rolling series of campus protests began, the UC Regents voted to increase student fees by a stunning 32 percent over the next academic year. While they attempted to soften the impact by increasing the number of students who would qualify for financial aid, the public relations impact was disastrous. Across the ten-campus system, students began occupying administrative buildings. Many faculty members, outraged at being asked to take furlough days that cut their salaries by up to 10 percent and at increased teaching loads caused by many lecturers' and TAs' positions being eliminated, joined in the walkouts. At UCLA and Berkeley, huge protests captured the attention of the national media. Meanwhile, UC president Mark Yudof pleaded with legislators to restore more than two-thirds of the $1 billion in lost funding to avoid an implosion of the country's pre-eminent public university system.

Half a state away from Davis, in the working-class, heavily industrial southern Los Angeles suburb of Torrance, tea partyers have taken to demonstrating weekends on the grassy street corner on the southwest side of the civic center. Their main bugbear is the fear of federal tax hikes to fund Obama's social programs. But talk to them—mostly white, mostly old, almost all beneficiaries of Social Security and Medicare, dwellers in a bungalow-land built from the wages doled out by government-funded military industries—and they quickly pivot into a denunciation of state and local tax increases too.

Instead of strengthening social services during these tough times, the state is pulling back local funds to cover for its own fiscal mess.

"I think we need to get the government to understand we won't accept new taxes—the federal government. The state needs to listen also," explains 75-year-old Donald Mitchell, sitting by the information table at a recent protest. A retired Hughes Aircraft engineer with a hearing aid in his left ear, a ruddy complexion and thinning, yellowing hair, Mitchell believes there's a power grab under way that is converting the country he loves to socialism. "The government is trying to take over one-sixth of our economy with healthcare, and that gets awfully close to socialism. Forget about the ownership of the banks."

These shock-troop opponents of healthcare reforms are also the most vociferous defenders of Proposition 13, the people who saw their tax rates locked in a generation ago and who are now unwilling to pony up more cash for the benefit of a younger, browner population. They watch Glenn Beck and listen to Rush Limbaugh—or to his virulently right-wing LA variants on *The John and Ken Show*. They believe big government is bringing down the Republic, and they're all too happy to wave at cars passing along Crenshaw Boulevard a bizarrely adapted US flag—the stripes and a circle of thirteen stars representing the original colonies, inside of which is the Roman numeral II, which stands, I'm told quietly, for the Second Revolution.

On the ground, the effects of this stalemate—one party wedded to big spending, another equally wedded to anti-taxism; one part of the population interested in building infrastructure, another only too happy to retreat further into its privatized world—have been catastrophic.

Mental health clinics are closing, state parks are limiting their admissions hours, county health clinics are shutting their doors, in-home services to the elderly have been decimated. And access to the state's health plan for low-income kids has been restricted—a less draconian option, it must be said, than the one contemplated at the height of the crisis: completely defunding the plan. At one point last summer, friends reported to me in amazement that local playgrounds had padlocked their toilet doors.

Shamefully, as a result of a line-item veto by Schwarzenegger in 2009, domestic violence centers have been all but defunded. In Santa Clarita, an exurb on the edge of Antelope Valley with a growing heroin and meth problem, that meant the loss of $200,000 for the local center; the firing of several counselors responsible for helping the 200-plus clients who came through the doors each year; the replacement of a full-time shelter advocate with three part-time ones; and an inability to pay rent on the down-at-the-heel suite of rooms the center occupied in a low-grade strip mall. Until a local businessman offered the use of one of his buildings a few miles away at below-market rates, the center teetered on the edge of closure.

"It's left us with two full-time staff in the office, including myself," asserts 32-year-old executive director Nicole Shellcroft. "Our clinical director volunteers two days a week to do therapy, and we have one part-time administrator. With two of us in the office, we have five lines that ring. We may miss someone or not be able to provide court accompaniment coverage."

At the same time that staffing has plummeted, the number of desperate people contacting the center for help has grown. Shellcroft and her colleague will answer the doorbell, and there'll be a mom with her kids and their suitcases standing outside, pleading for help in getting into a shelter.

Instead of working to protect the poor and maintain local services during these tough times, the state is punishing localities to cover for its own dysfunction. California's budget crisis "is as big a threat as the bank failures were," argues LA City Council president Eric Garcetti. City politicians, he says, "feel like the guy who knows times are tough; we cut back expenses, sold the car, got an old clunker and stopped going out to dinner. And there's a guy down the street saying, 'My Ferrari's not working. Give me your money.'" The state, Garcetti adds in clarification, is the Ferrari owner.

"I'm aghast at what's happened there [in Sacramento]," Mayor Villaraigosa declares. "The gridlock, the partisanship, the pervasive vitriol, which has prevented us from solving this crisis." LA has a $30 million hole in its housing authority budget and is only able to subsidize rent for one-bedroom apartments these days, no matter the size of the needy family. Because the state took the city's redevelopment dollars, park construction

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has been put on hold. And severely mentally ill patients around the city are being turned away from clinics because the money simply isn't there to treat them.

"We have a beautiful building and we're on life support," Dr. Steven Hochstadt, director of clinical services at the VMH facility in Glendale, explains. "It's all edifice."

It could serve as an epitaph for California these days: a gorgeous state with a terrific infrastructure built up over the past century, but no money or political will to keep the place running properly. ■

American Idle

As GM shutters a plant, an Ohio city in decline struggles to imagine a future.

by CHRISTOPHER PHELPS

Despite the candy tossed out to children lining the curbs, the annual Labor Day parade in Mansfield, Ohio, last September was a melancholy observance. Pride of place went to United Auto Workers Local 549, its days sadly numbered, but much of the parade bore scant relation to labor. Fez-wearing Shriners zoomed around in tiny yellow cars, the high school marching band shuffled along indifferently and a Jesus impersonator stood astride a float for "Ohio's only life-size wax museum," the Living Bible Museum Bible Walk.

RYAN INZANA

The Steelworkers mounted a float advocating the Employee Free Choice Act, the Richland County AFL-CIO Central Labor Council endorsed universal health reform and the Teamsters, postal workers and building trades all turned out despite gloomy skies. But UAW Local 549—hammered by news that Mansfield's giant General Motors stamping plant, once the city's largest employer, will shut down in 2010—did not rise to the desperate occasion with some defiant final gesture. Not one autoworker even marched. Instead, Local 549's leaders drove the parade route in twelve vehicles bearing a GM dealer's logo, as if obliged to hawk the products of the very firm whose management has sounded their local's death knell.

At the very tail end of this cavalcade, almost unnoticed, came a spark of independent working-class creativity. Two men bore between them a large sign reading "Lest We Forget." Against its black background were listed the manufacturers that have exited Mansfield in recent decades, among them Dominion Electric (1971), Mansfield Tire and Rubber (1978), Hoover Plastics (1980), National Seating (1985), Tappan Stoves (1986), Westinghouse (1990), Ohio Brass (1990), Wickes Lumber (1997), Crane Plumbing (2003), Neer Manufacturing (2007) and Smurfit-Stone Container (2009).

"My family, offsprings, have all worked at these factories at one time or another," said Willis Fraley, 69, the sign's creator. "My wife has worked at two of them. And they've all closed."

Fraley worked at Ohio Brass for twenty-nine years until that firm, a Mansfield mainstay dating back to the nineteenth century, shut its doors. Afterward he held a string of factory jobs in Cleveland, Galion and Wooster, compelled to move along each time because of downsizings or closings. The "Lest We Forget" sign was his tribute to north central Ohioans who have given their lives to companies only to see them abandon the region.

"We actually built Mansfield," he said. "And what's here today? Look up and down the streets, all the empty homes."

A Middletown for the twenty-first century, Mansfield is a microcosm of America idled. Equidistant between Cleveland and Columbus, it has a core population of 49,346, with 128,852 in its metro area. The city's official unemployment rate is 12.1 percent, well above state and national averages—and if the chronically discouraged are considered, the rate is nearly one in five.

Mansfield's fabled origins date back to pioneer days, when it was named for a surveyor appointed by Thomas Jefferson. On ground that is now its town square, blockhouses were built to fend off Indian attacks in the War of 1812. As the seat of Richland County, whose name testifies to the area's early agricultural bounty, Mansfield developed industrially when flour mills arose after railroads arrived in the 1830s. British and German immigration in the nineteenth century, supplemented by white Appalachian and Southern African-American migration in the twentieth, provided a ready workforce.

By the middle of the twentieth century, Mansfield was humming along at near-full employment, making stoves, tires, steel, machinery, refrigerators and autos. "When I got out of high school in '66," said Jon Houston, a postal carrier for thirty-five years, "you could still go to any factory in Mansfield and get a job. I went down to Westinghouse. They hired me and said, You start tomorrow."

That seems another world now. In the current recession alone, the city has lost Con-Way Freight, Value City, Circuit City and Cord Camera, not to mention restaurants like Ruby Tuesday. A multiplier effect of plummeting property values,

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declining tax revenues and failing small businesses is kicking in. The loss of General Motors threatens a further chain reaction as small suppliers are hit.

"You go out and search all the time for work, and there's nothing around here," says Ron Hacker, 45. "Even if anyone is hiring, it's very low-wage." Hacker lost his Teamsters job at Smurfit-Stone, a maker of corrugated boxes for Anheuser-Busch, when its Mansfield plant was closed in May, leaving eighty-three jobless. His wife, Jinny, had already lost her supervisory job at Gap in 2007, when the retailer eliminated its Richland Mall store. Now the Hackers work three part-time jobs between them, have exhausted their 401(k)s and are struggling with Wells Fargo to retain their home.

"I feel like Americans are missing the picture," Hacker says, "because there are people like us, we've worked our whole life, lots of hours and lots of jobs, we've got our kids through school and college, we were pretty much working toward retirement—and now the rug is pulled out from under us."

As recently as five years ago, GM's Mansfield-Ontario Metal Center was operating at full-tilt boogie. The state-of-the-art presses at the 2.9 million-square-foot plant pounded away "like a train moving at full speed," in the words of Charles Bias, stamping out car doors, roofs, hoods, dashes and countless other large panels and parts.

'There are people like us, we've worked our whole life, lots of hours…and now the rug is pulled out from under us.' —Ron Hacker, 45

Following in the footsteps of his father, who worked there thirty years, Bias started at the plant in 2000 in production, working his way up to the skilled trades. "I was working all the overtime I could stand, and some I couldn't," he says. Today the company that once could not get enough of Bias's labor finds no use for him at all. He was told to clean out his tools at Christmas 2008 in a layoff of several hundred. Last summer, 574 took buyouts. The remaining skeleton crew of about 420 will be transferred somewhere else in GM's dwindling archipelago once Mansfield's plant falls silent on January 29.

Despite clear signs of trouble, GM's closure announcement stunned Mansfield workers, who took pride in their award-winning productivity. "Everybody's not in the best mood," says Arnold Salyers, a forklift driver and former union rep, interviewed as he moves stacked parts. "This here was—and still is—the number-one stamping plant that General Motors has throughout the United States and North America."

At one time it would have been impossible for GM to shutter its Mansfield plant. Built in 1955, the big-box facility was soon making components for 90 percent of all GM cars, coast to coast. A citadel of hillbilly proletarian militancy, the plant erupted repeatedly in strikes. The largest, a 1967 wildcat, exploded when managers suspended two crane operators for refusing to load stamping dies at a shipping dock. Believing the company was moving the dies to avoid paying the overtime required to test them in Mansfield, practically the entire membership of Local 549—2,652 workers—walked out, bringing GM production nationwide to a screeching halt. The *New York Times* observed that the wildcat "nearly paralyzed the world's largest industrial corporation" and "embarrassed one of the nation's biggest labor unions." UAW president Walter Reuther promptly seized the rebel local, and GM began diversifying its stamping operations.

The Mansfield closure is the endpoint of broader developments long in the making. Shop-floor militancy ebbed with the 1973–74 recession, UAW leaders retreated into concessionary bargaining and union power eroded in the 1970s and '80s as parts manufacturers relocated production while foreign-owned transplants such as Toyota, Nissan and Honda started popping up in the South. "The crisis for the UAW," said Chrysler retiree and longtime union dissident Mike Parker, "is in not having organized all the other plants."

The Big Three were at a competitive disadvantage because of "legacy costs," the pension and healthcare benefits first wrested by the UAW in the 1940s and '50s. Had the UAW organized the transplants, compelling them to pay such benefits too, or had the United States adopted national healthcare, the playing field would have been leveled. But the UAW did not organize well and the Big Three never pushed concertedly for national healthcare, despite the crippling effect on their bottom lines. "These are ideological firms," explains historian Nelson Lichtenstein. "These firms don't want to legitimize government regulation, General Motors in particular."

For a time, Mansfield's GM plant actually added workers, peaking at 4,800 in the 1980s, a decade when the plant was thoroughly modernized. Up to just a few years ago, the company was still installing brand-new presses on the shop floor. But when oil prices spiked in 2008, consumers shunned GM's gas-guzzling SUVs. Credit, so critical to auto sales, dried up in the financial crisis. Reeling, GM closed assembly plants, including one in Moraine, Ohio. That sealed the fate of Mansfield's once-vital operations. GM's highest-capacity stamping plant in North America became a stand-alone outlier, its shipping costs prohibitive. As GM, hemorrhaging cash, threw off its qualms about government intrusion to obtain a $49 billion bailout, its survival plan targeted Mansfield for excision.

Workers who took the buyout say that what they miss most about their jobs is the pay. Paul Frey, a die maker, started apprenticing at GM in 2003 at $25 an hour, more than the $19 he made as a journeyman at Therm-O-Disc, a nonunion temperature sensor manufacturer. Frey found GM "more demanding," but he advanced to $32 an hour and liked the closer relations between skilled-trades and production workers at GM, which he attributes to the union sensibility that "we're all working toward the same goal."

Not every worker mourns the plant's death. "I'm glad it's over for me," says Lodema M'Poko, a mother of two unable to resist the pay. "Actually, if I could turn back the clock, I would never have taken that job. I'm still dealing with aches and pains." Even

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Charles Bias, who misses the job and believes its loss cost him his marriage, found handling large auto parts brutal: "In nine and a half years' employment at GM, I received two major cuts from metal, I blew out my right knee, I had a partially torn ligament in my right elbow and I tore my left bicep muscle."

Those who kept their positions with GM despite its restructuring are being displaced in their own way. Mark Haney, a 32-year-old die maker, is shifting to a Marion, Indiana, stamping plant. His parents came to Ohio in the civil rights era as children when his grandparents sought better jobs than they could find in Mississippi and Florida. His mother went to work at GM, his father at Ohio Brass. Now Haney, with three boys of his own, is embarking on his own migration. "We have to move," he said, "and go where the work's at."

With careful planning, a tour of Mansfield could be arranged that would bypass its hard times. Begin a half-hour's drive south at Mohican State Forest, with its picturesque sandstone bluffs. Proceed along winding roads to Malabar Farm, the estate of novelist Louis Bromfield, where Humphrey Bogart wed Lauren Bacall in 1945. Continue north to the upscale suburb of Lexington, past the multimillion-dollar YMCA fitness center, to Woodland, a historic Mansfield neighborhood with grand brick manor houses. Tend west to the art center, pause on Marion Avenue to see the boyhood home of Senator Sherrod Brown, head out to the placid Clear Fork Reservoir, and wend your way north by way of suburban Ontario's affluent subdivisions to the Ohio State University's wooded regional campus and the Westbrook Country Club. This verdant amble provides a sense of why Mansfield was the pastoral idyll of John Chapman, the mythic Johnny Appleseed, when he lived here from 1820 to 1840.

Very different conclusions suggest themselves, however, if you begin on the east side, amid the modest homes of Madison township, a working-class suburb. Head into Mansfield, past the junkyard and water treatment plant. Follow the railway tracks north, and towering over it all you will see the abandoned seven-story Westinghouse factory, the city's largest employer between the 1920s and 1970s. Once 8,500 employees worked here in sixteen buildings on forty-two acres, turning out stoves and refrigerators. During World War II the plant made aircraft radio transmitters, wings and bomb parts. Now the factory is barren, its windows pockmarked by thrown stones, the immense W on its water tower faded. From Westinghouse in all directions, particularly out to the largely black North End, stretch "the flats," lowlands crowded with skinny houses planted a few feet apart. Once erected in a booming factory town, they are now dilapidated eyesores, attracting slumlords who never bother with repairs, their porches bowed, their siding weatherbeaten, their paint peeling. Many are boarded over.

Mansfield's median household income, $30,176, is far below the national median of $41,994. In the city schools, the poverty rate among children—defined by the Census Bureau as a four-person household with income under $22,025—is a staggering 28.8 percent. In part, this is the old story of racial disparity in America; Mansfield is almost 20 percent black. It is also the familiar story of the deterioration of urban schools with the flight of upper-middle-class whites, with their tax dollars, to the suburbs, since Richland County as a whole is nearly 10 percent black. But every school district in the county has seen its poverty rate rise in the past ten years, and a number have double-digit rates, including Madison (16.4 percent), Crestview (17.1 percent) and Plymouth-Shiloh (23.2 percent).

Foreclosures in Richland County are at an all-time high and will likely number about 1,000 for 2009, estimates Mansfield's fair housing director, Don Mitchell. Initially brought on by predatory lending, foreclosures now reflect generalized economic distress. "We're seeing a lot more people who have good loans, good interest rates," says foreclosure prevention advocate Tracy Bond of Empowering and Strengthening Ohio's People (ESOP). "They've lost their job and can't sell their house."

At First Call, an assistance referral hot line, Terry Carter reports "an unprecedented level of need," including many who have "never, ever had to go through the system before." Meanwhile, United Way fundraising has fallen, social service budgets are being cut, alcohol abuse is rising among unemployed middle-age men, calls to suicide hot lines have increased and heroin use is exploding. Richland County's heroin dealers, says the spokesperson for a ten-county law enforcement drug task force, Lt. Dino Sgambellone, sometimes travel to Columbus twice daily to replenish their wares: "It doesn't take them long to sell out."

In Mansfield, social service budgets are being cut, alcohol abuse is rising and calls to suicide hot lines have increased.

Mansfield's initial factory closings in the 1970s and '80s were partially counterbalanced by the expanding GM plant, but as GM leaves, few other employers offer a comparable living. Out near the regional airport and state prison, newer industrial parks exist in auto parts and other forms of manufacturing, but the firms are nonunion. Rumors abound that the cavernous GM plant will be bought up by Hyundai or some other company, but given the industry's overcapacity, there are few takers for the many such facilities on the market. Even should the plant be sold, its new occupier will almost surely be nonunion.

Jay Goyal, scion of a local metal manufacturing family, is a young Democratic state legislator who represents Richland County, usually a Republican district. He holds innovation and education to be key to the area's revival, looking to a wind farm rising near Shelby and prospects for bioproducts (plant-derived plastic equivalents). The question is whether such industries, if they do materialize, will yield high-paying jobs. Tim Bowersock, Mansfield's economic development director, points to StarTek as a success story. A firm that handles outsourced customer care and technical support, StarTek opened a call

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center in Mansfield in 2008 that now employs more than 900 workers. But StarTek's customer service representatives start at $9 an hour, many of them part time.

"Ten dollars an hour in Mansfield's a pretty decent job now," says Brian Speelman. "That's pretty sad, because who can raise a family on ten dollars an hour?" Speelman is president of United Steelworkers Local 169, which represents 279 workers at Mansfield's immense AK Steel mill, where more than half the workforce lost their jobs in a bitter 1999–2003 lockout. "Eventually, people are going to stand up and say, Why is this company making a multimillion-dollar profit and they're paying me eight bucks an hour?"

Unionization of StarTek, Wal-Mart and the rest of the retail and service sector might bring living wages, but Speelman's vision of a labor fightback must be squared with Mansfield's quiescence. Richland County's only self-declaredly "revolutionary" mobilizations are occasional red-white-and-blue tea parties to denounce "socialism." A more reality-based form of resistance did occur in June, when foreclosure justice activists organized homeowners and labor union members to hit the downtown Mansfield branch of JPMorgan Chase, protesting its foreclosures by tossing little plastic sharks around the lobby.

The GM stamping plant, it appears, will end with a whimper. In contrast to Republic Windows and Doors in Chicago, where a shutdown prompted workers to take over a plant one year ago, GM lived up to its contractual obligations, notifying workers well in advance and granting them buyouts or transfers. Furthermore, UAW Local 549's leadership shows no fighting spirit à la 1967. According to Lodema M'Poko, who describes herself as pro-union, the "union morale has drastically reduced" in the plant because members "think the union—not just for Mansfield, the UAW in general—is too in bed with the company."

Every four years swarms of *New Yorker* and *Washington Post* journalists blanket Ohio, searching for Joe the Plumber. They file reports that Ohio workers are irredeemably conservative and racist, incapable of voting for, say, Barack Obama (as Ohio did). Few such writers are likely to turn up when Mansfield's fifty-five-year-old GM plant stamps its last part on January 29. If they did, they might detect other story lines about Ohio's working class: the shattering of the link between hard work and economic security, the price working people are paying for the collapse and restructuring of corporate America, and the perversity of an economy that no longer seems to value making anything other than exchange-traded funds and credit-default swaps.

Willis Fraley, holding his "Lest We Forget" sign on Labor Day, faults "deregulation back in the eighties" and "this free trade in the nineties" for the exodus of high-paying manufacturing jobs from Ohio. "Where did they go? They didn't stay in Mansfield. Like an old farmer told me one time, 'Willis, it's a little late now. The chicken coop is open, and all the chickens are out.'" ■

Letters

(continued from page 2)

Cockburn Replies

PETROLIA, CALIF.

To Mr. Swift: The atmosphere is not a blanket. "The warmth from the third blanket" was indeed your imagination. As you were lying in your bed, the only source of warmth was your body (about equal to a 100-watt light bulb). The blankets provide insulation to reduce the rate of escape of heat from your body to the colder air. The blankets provide no warmth, and all the heat flow is from your body through the blankets to the colder air, in accordance with the second law.

To Mr. Thomas: You state correctly that the net heat flow (actually, radiation) is outward, from the warm earth to the cold atmosphere, in strict conformance with the second law. But that statement is in direct contradiction to your earlier statement that the "cold greenhouse gases…absorb some of the outgoing radiation…and reradiate some of it back to the warmer earth." Cold gases cannot spontaneously transfer energy to a warmer earth, whether the transfer is by conduction, convection or radiation.

You also state that "without greenhouse gases," the earth would be "a huge ice ball." That hypothesis is referred to as "the cold earth fallacy" and was disproven in *Energy & Environment*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (2009), pp. 83-93, which is available at icecap.us/images/uploads/EE20-1_Hertzberg.pdf.

To Mr. Davis and Mr. Swift: In real greenhouses, there is no heat transfer from the cold panes to the inside of the greenhouse. The glass enclosure isolates the greenhouse from the surroundings and prevents heat loss by natural convection. The atmosphere's CO_2 content has no significant effect on the natural convection processes in the atmosphere. The heating effect in a greenhouse has nothing to do with the infrared absorption of the glass enclosure. This was proven by Wood's 1909 experiment, which compared an enclosure that had a glass lid (which absorbs IR radiation) with a rock salt lid (which transmits IR radiation). When both were exposed to the same input radiation from the sun, there was no difference in the rate of heating or the final temperature attained by the two enclosures.

To Ms. Kunkel: Fortunately, the professional standards for physicians are far superior to those for "climate scientists." That should be obvious from the climategate e-mails. The "climate scientist" category was recently invented mainly by computer modelers, most of whom have never actually analyzed a weather map or had the responsibility of making a real-world weather forecast. Try asking some meteorologists, climatologists or geologists, and see whether 90 percent of them agree that "global warming is a problem caused by humans." More than 30,000 scientists have signed the Oregon Petition, which refutes the AGW theory. In any case, the opinions of "90 percent of climate scientists" are worthless in the face of the data. The discoverer of CO_2, who also discovered its role in photosynthesis, was the Unitarian minister and scientist Joseph Priestley. Until his dying day, Priestley, together with all the learned science authorities of his day, were firm believers in the phlogiston theory of combustion. It took only a few of Lavoisier's careful experiments to prove that the theory, held by all the authorities of his day, was false.Poor Lavoisier—look what happened to him! He was dispatched because the Revolution had no need of scientists. We do need real scientists, in which context I'm glad to acknowledge the help of Dr. Martin Hertzberg in supplying the data above.

ALEXANDER COCKBURN

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Books & the Arts.

A Fine Romance

by MIRIAM MARKOWITZ

DOUG CHAYKA

What we know about love in the times that preceded ours we have learned from proverb, myth and literature, and that knowledge remains, to this day, somewhat spotty. Love may be blind, a baptism and many splendored. A red, red rose or a wild plant born of a wet night; unlucky at cards; the course that never did run smooth; done with the compass, done with the chart! A labor we lose. The lineage of love is provisional and perhaps discontinuous: if the reign of love commenced with Adam and Eve soon after the dawn of the world, then the textual traces of their union were many years out of date by the time the Book of Genesis arrived a few centuries before the common era. Did Adam profess undying love to Eve before the serpent stole her heart? Perhaps not, but how are we to know?

It seems there are two possible ways love has developed from the beginning of time until now: either it is a universal passed down to us from the first generations—the passion of Adam for Eve—or it is a cultural manifestation of lust, a kind of expressive outpouring that, if it roils the soul, does so only in the ways that our hearts have lately been conditioned. The question of love's universality is not only unanswerable but untranslatable, lost in the slippage between our understanding of the English word "love" and the meanings of the Greeks' *eros*, *agape*, *philia* and *storge*, the various Latinate iterations of *amor*, Hebrew's *ahava* and other near cognates of diverse languages and epochs.

That said, literature remains our best, most comprehensive archive of human love. All that we expect of love, our notions of how it will lift us, reward us, transform us, comes from a long line of books, poems and songs that have detailed what we may hope for from love and what price it will exact in exchange for its pleasures. Yet as Cristina Nehring argues in her recent treatise, *A Vindication of Love*, given that love has long been an animating force in literature it is surprising that it is so out of favor among novelists, poets and their ilk today. "Where once upon a time love poetry was the most abundant poetry written, it is now among the rarest—particularly in high-brow publications. Adolescents are still allowed to write love poems. Famous poets are not—or only if they demonstrate Latin American provenance or prodigious restraint."

Nehring's book is an elaborate defense of ferocious, passionate love, a love that "at its strongest and wildest and most authentic… is a demon," a religious faith and a "divine madness." In Nehring's view, this love is endangered after an embattled twentieth century that brought us Freud, feminism, pheromones and friends with benefits. Love in the twenty-first century has never been freer or easier, she writes, and yet, paradoxically, it has been "defused and discredited.… Streamlined, safety-checked, and emptied of spiritual consequence." Not just love itself but its many attendant rites and rituals: courtship, mating, marriage—all these have been attenuated, coupled "with AA batteries and [sold] over the counter." Romance in our time, Nehring asserts, has gone flaccid, and it is the task of writers and other lovers of high feeling and good prose style to arouse it,

A Vindication of Love
Reclaiming Romance for the Twenty-first Century.
By Cristina Nehring.
Harper. 328 pp. $24.99.

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not just in their art but in their lives—their love lives, to be exact. Balzac wrote that "grand passions are as rare as masterpieces." Nehring's revision: "Not only are grand passions as rare as masterpieces; they *are* masterpieces."

Nehring's examples traverse centuries and vocations, but in recounting the stories of nearly all of her heroines (and the heroines of this book far outpace the heroes, both in love and in art), Nehring finds that the quality of their creative output is correlated with their capacity to love. Mary Wollstonecraft, for instance, was a "warrior princess" and "lover-revolutionary" whose terrific power for love fueled two suicide attempts as well as the writing of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, the treatise by which Nehring's own was clearly inspired. "We reason deeply," said Wollstonecraft, "when we forcibly feel."

Nehring posits an intermingling of life, art and imagination that assumes love, while on the run, still exists as a constant, a universal experience that is in a period of retrenchment but has not, in any fundamental way, disappeared. In the final pages of her book, she describes the yearning of men and women for a "new era," one "of revived romantic hope, of greater trust between genders and fresh daring among lovers," and she is confident that the paragons she has described in the preceding pages—among them the ability of Wollstonecraft and Margaret Fuller to love ardently and unrequitedly, the breathless physical and intellectual infatuation of Abelard and Heloise, and the long marriage of the minds of Hannah Arendt and Heinrich Blücher—will provide a blueprint for a new model, one that will include but transcend the loves of our predecessors without betraying their spirit.

A noble sentiment, and one that I share. I know many women, and even a number of men, who believe that something is missing from their experience of love. It is easy to dismiss their sense of loss as a manufactured fantasy or nostalgia for a golden age that never existed; this reasoning takes as its starting point stasis, assuming perpetual continuity instead of investigating the possibility of real rupture. Nehring, too, ignores the possibility of rupture, which allows her to address many important questions about the state of love in our time—why we still stigmatize women who choose romantic exhilaration over conjugal security; why love's long and spectacular association with the heroic seems to have disintegrated—without ever asking those most crucial to her investigation. If love and art are so intimately linked—if love begets art and art documents love—who is to say that one can survive without the other? And if, then, love has disappeared, how can we be sure it is ever coming back?

In *A Vindication of Love*, any number of topics nettle Nehring—Internet dating, vibrators, the cult of safe sex—but none so much as the "antiromantic bias" of conventional feminism, which she details at length.

"In fact, *love can be a form of feminism*," Nehring says, and her numerous examples of passionate and impassioned feminists prove her point. Despite digs at Andrea Dworkin and "the man-hating clichés of old-style feminism," Nehring is not against feminism so much as critical of the way feminism has been a party to the diminishment of love. But feminism (and only the mainstream of it, though Nehring never tells us which of its apostate strains she can support) is merely one of a bevy of co-conspirators: "Undermined over the centuries and decades by feminism, materialism, pragmatism, and cynicism, [love] has been eclipsed, in our own day, by an assembly of inferior idols. Stripped of its lyrical charge, it has become as convenient and tasteless as fast food. It has become fast love. Or rather, it has become non-love."

It is no accident that "fast food" appears here as the analogue to "fast" or "non" love. Nehring's critique of feminism is in essence a critique of its unholy alliance with consumer culture, which has reduced love not only to a commodity but a rather tatty one at that. Nehring never makes this argument explicitly, but in using the language of consumerism to describe what feminism hath wrought (she rails against "the Hallmark universe of romantic sentiments" and the maligning of any prospective mate who "lacks a perfect plastic Fisher-Price shell"), she makes it clear that sins of each are inextricable. But to focus on Nehring's demonization of certain strains of feminism is to lose sight of her true adversary, one that she describes only briefly and yet serves as the primary foil to her thesis: the theory of the invention of courtly love, as popularized by C.S. Lewis in his 1936 monograph *The Allegory of Love*.

Lewis believed that love as we understand it was born at a precise moment in time. "Every one has heard of courtly love, and every one knows that it appears quite suddenly at the end of the eleventh century in Languedoc," writes Nehring, quoting Lewis. "Before the eleventh century, according to this view," she tells us, "romance, such as we know it today, did not exist. There may have been animal lust, there may have been amiable companionship, there may have been boisterous sex play, but there was not that spiritualized sort of euphoria, that combination of sexual and metaphysical transport that we, in our day, associate with romantic love." Nehring then explains that this thesis has since become the consensus of modern scholars, and counters with a number of examples that prove, in her mind, that romantic love as we know it must have preceded medieval French poetry and that Lewis was mistaken.

For example, Lewis argued that Renaissance readers of the *Symposium* misunderstood Plato when they imagined that the "ladder of love" did not require the abandonment of individual, mortal love in the ascent toward the absolute beauty of the divine. According to Nehring, this is "pedantic" if not "willfully blind"; for her, the revolutionary perspective on love inaugurated by the *Symposium* emphasized "not the abandonment of the beloved but his eye-opening and elevating effect on the lover." Later she derides scholars for ignoring the *Ars Amatoria*, Ovid's bawdy, seductional instructional manual, as a likely origin of the "rule-breaking fervor of Western love literature" and for favoring, instead, the theory that it was "a group of far graver young men who lived 1000-plus years after him," the troubadours, who popularized the adoration of other men's wives.

Despite her clear implication of Lewis among those errant "modern scholars" who hold the troubadours, rather than Ovid, responsible for our culture's longstanding fascination with adultery and transgression, Nehring never directly addresses Lewis's discussion of Ovid in *The Allegory of Love*. A reader wouldn't know that Lewis considered Ovid to have written the *Ars Amatoria* as an "amusement," an "ironically didactic" poem that "presupposes an audience to whom love is one of the minor peccadilloes of life, and the joke consists in treating it seriously." Nehring describes Ovid's work as a "first-century self-help book" as well as "the first dating book ever written," though she recognizes that the "rambunctious" Ovid was "forever making fun." She points not to Lewis but unnamed "modern-day editors" who consider the work a "'tongue-in-cheek' parody." She asserts that "Ovid takes his subject seriously," and whether or not he did, it seems worth noting what Lewis sees as the distinction between Ovid's perspective and the troubadours'. According to Lewis, the "conduct which Ovid recommends is felt to be shameful and absurd," but

> the very same conduct which Ovid ironically recommended could be rec-

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Myths About Israel and the Middle East (1)

Do the media feed us fiction instead of fact?

We all know that, by dint of constant repetition, white can be made to appear black, good can get transformed into evil, and myth may take the place of reality. Israel, with roughly one-thousandth of the world's population and with a similar fraction of the territory of this planet, seems to engage a totally disproportionate attention of the print and broadcast media of the world. Unfortunately, much of what the media tell us — in reporting, editorializing in columns, and in analysis — are endlessly repeated myths.

What are the facts?

■ **Myth:** The "Palestinians" are a nation and therefore deserving of a homeland.

Reality: The concept of Palestinian nationhood is a new one and had not been heard of until after the Six-Day War (1967), when Israel, by its victory, came into the administration of the territories of Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") and the Gaza Strip. The so-called "Palestinians" are no more different from the Arabs living in the neighboring countries of Lebanon, Syria and Jordan, than Wisconsinites are from Iowans.

> "Peace will only come when the Arabs finally accept the reality of Israel. And that is not a myth — that is a fact!"

■ **Myth:** Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") and the Gaza Strip are "occupied Arab territory."

Reality: All of "Palestine" — east and west of the Jordan River — was part of the League of Nations mandate. Under the Balfour Declaration, all of it was to be the "national home for the Jewish people." In violation of this mandate, Great Britain severed the entire area east of the Jordan River — about 75% of Palestine — and gave it to the Arabs, who created on it the kingdom of Transjordan. When Israel declared its independence in 1948, five Arab armies invaded the new country in order to destroy it at its very birth. They were defeated by the Israelis. The Transjordanians, however, remained in occupation of Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") and East Jerusalem. They proceeded to drive all Jews from those territories and to systematically destroy all Jewish houses of worship and other institutions. The Transjordanians (now renamed "Jordanians") were the occupiers for nineteen years. Israel regained these territories following its victory in the Six-Day War. Israel has returned the entire Gaza Strip to the Palestinians. The final status of the "West Bank" will be decided if and when the Palestinians will finally be able to sit down and seriously talk peace with Israel.

■ **Myth:** Jewish settlements in Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") are the "greatest obstacle to peace."

Reality: This is simply not correct, although it has been repeated so often that many have come to believe it. The greatest obstacle to peace is the intransigence and the irreconcilable hostility of the Arabs. Not more than 200,000 Jews are settled in these territories, living among about 1.4 million Arabs. How can Jews living there be an obstacle to peace? Why shouldn't they live there? About 1.2 million Arabs live in Israel proper. They are not an obstacle to peace. Neither the Israelis nor they themselves consider them as such.

■ **Myth:** Israel is unwilling to yield "land for peace."

Reality: The concept that to the loser, rather than to the victor, belong the spoils is a radically new one, never before thought of in world history. Israel has emerged victorious in the five wars imposed on it by the Arabs. In order to make peace, it has returned over 90% of the territory occupied by it, specifically the vast Sinai Peninsula, to Egypt. That territory contained some of the most advanced military installations in the world, prosperous cities and settlements, and oil fields developed entirely by Israel that made it independent of petroleum imports. In the Camp David Accords, Israel agreed to autonomy for Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") with the permanent status to be determined after three years. But no responsible Palestinian representation has been available to negotiate with Israel about this.

All these myths (and others we shall talk about) have poisoned the atmosphere for decades. The root cause of the never-ending conflict is the unwillingness of the Arabs (and not just the Palestinians) to accept the reality of Israel. What a pity that those of the Palestinians who are not Israeli citizens have lived and continue to live in poverty, misery and ignorance. They could have chosen to accept the proposed partition of the country in 1947, would now have had their state alongside Israel for over sixty years and could have lived in peace and prosperity. They could have kept hundreds of thousands of refugees in their homes and could have saved tens of thousands of lives. Peace will only come when the Arabs finally accept the reality of Israel. And that is not a myth — that is a fact!

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> ommended seriously by the courtly tradition. To leap up on errands, to go through heat or cold, at the bidding of one's lady, or even of any lady, would seem but honourable and natural to a gentleman of the thirteenth century or even of the seventeenth century; and most of us have gone shopping in the twentieth with ladies who showed no sign of regarding the tradition as a dead letter.

Nehring's glancing jabs at Lewis—which, though they aren't gross mischaracterizations of his argument, are so brief and reductive that one may hardly comprehend what it is she is arguing against—obscure the real threat that his thesis of fundamental change poses to her assumption of basic continuity. Nehring fails to seriously assess the keystone of his argument, which is that specific historical conditions made a new conception of love possible and that "our only difficulty is to imagine in all its bareness the mental world that existed before its coming."

Lewis argued that love did not evolve into chivalry, the "romantic species of passion" some still cherish today, until it arrived in singular circumstances: medieval Provence, where many landless knights would serve a single lord, whose lady and her small coterie of attendants were the only suitable objects of romantic desire, and for whom the knights would perform heroic deeds to prove their love; where the relationship between lord and vassal, "in all its intensity and warmth, already existed" and was a "mould into which romantic passion would almost certainly be poured"; and where the Christian tradition of religious piety might be easily mapped onto another form of deference and devotion, equally pure, for all that the object was mortal. Thus, Lewis argues, courtly love, which revolved around the tenets of humility, courtesy and adultery, became "an extension of religion, an escape from religion, a rival religion."

Through first the lyrics of the Provençal troubadours and then the Arthurian romances of Chrétien de Troyes and the Breton *lais* of Marie de France, this religion gradually infected the literature of Europe. Over the years, scholars have challenged various aspects of the theory of "courtly love" (the term is thought to have been coined by the medievalist Gaston Paris in the 1880s) on the basis that what occurred in the literature had little correspondence to actual social life—that the position of women, even among the aristocracy, in feudal France was no more exalted than in its neighbors to the north. Especially controversial are the notorious "courts of love," in which noble ladies, beginning with Eleanor of Aquitaine and her daughter Marie de Champagne, were supposed to have arbitrated cases according to the laws of love. There is evidence of these courts in chivalric literature, just as there is evidence of dragons and fairies. Whether all these existed as such in the world remains dubious.

But the question of the reality of these courts is, in some sense, immaterial. In the realm of chivalric romance, the ladies ruled, and the men, obligingly, obeyed them, and since the Middle Ages, chivalry has become the template for romance in the Western world, if not for marriage. (Courtly love, as the French would have it, by definition excluded amour between spouses.) That love existed and was recorded in world literature before such a time seems obviously true; that its form might be fundamentally different from the romantic tradition we have inherited from European literature does not. And if this latter case is undecided, then the question of the exhaustion of that tradition, in art and in life, remains open as well. "Real changes in human sentiment are very rare—there are perhaps three or four on record—but I believe that they occur, and that this is one of them," Lewis ventures. Earlier he reminds us that "it seems to us natural that love should be the commonest theme of serious imaginative literature: but a glance at classical antiquity or at the Dark Ages at once shows us that what we took for 'nature' is really a special state of affairs, which will probably have an end."

Sixty years later, in *The End of the Novel of Love* (1997), the critic Vivian Gornick argued that what Lewis prophesied had finally come to pass. When Gornick was a girl, she recalls, the whole world believed in love. This was the Bronx, New York City, sometime around World War II. The mothers had various advice for their daughters about the nature of love and its embodiments of greater or lesser disappointment, but whatever their admonishments, "love" itself was the creed, a simple operating principle in an unpredictable world. "It's just as easy to fall in love with a rich man as a poor man"; "Don't do like I did. Marry a man you love"; "You're smart, make something of yourself, but always remember, love is the most important thing in a woman's life."

When Gornick was a girl, love wasn't just meaningful—it was the quality that gave life meaning. It put each woman "at the center of [her] own experience." Indeed, only love guaranteed that one would experience "experience." In midcentury America, she explains, the great novels of love were long ago written, but they were still read, and they informed her girlish hopes and dreams and those of her childhood friends. Then, when the girls grew up, everything changed:

> We loved once, and we loved badly. We loved again, and again we loved badly. We did it a third time, and we were no longer living in a world free of experience. We saw that love did not make us tender, wise, or compassionate. Under its influence we gave up neither our fears nor our angers. Within ourselves we remained unchanged. The development was an astonishment: not at all what had been expected. The atmosphere became charged with revelation, and it altered us permanently as a culture.

The End of the Novel of Love is a collection of loosely related essays on the development of literary love since the late days of the nineteenth century, when George Meredith published *Diana of the Crossways*, one of a number of striking novels of the period in which the heroine, at the exact moment when she "should melt," suddenly hardens her heart against the novel's hero. In this novel, as in *Mrs. Dalloway*, *Daniel Deronda* and *The House of Mirth*, the moment of reckoning signals a break not only with the hero but with the tradition of the novel of love as articulated by its greatest writers: Balzac, Flaubert, Tolstoy, Stendahl; I would add the Brontës and Austen, among others. At this moment, sentimental love "becomes a thing of the past. Which is not to say the marriage will not take place; half the time it will. It is only to say that in these novels this is the point at which the story begins."

Gornick shows how, with each generation of writers, the power of love as the activating force of the novel has waned, and how the metaphor of love has become, for writers such as Raymond Carver, Richard Ford and Jane Smiley, "an act of nostalgia, not of discovery." The difference between these later books and the old novels of love is not in the numbers of marriages made or happily ever afters accomplished—certainly it did not end well for Anna Karenina or Emma Bovary—but in the power of love to make or break the life of the protagonists, socially, physically and spiritually:

> When Emma Bovary was loosening her stays with a man other than her husband, or Anna Karenina running away from hers, or Newbold Archer

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> agonizing over whether to leave New York with Ellen Olenska, people were indeed risking all for love. Bourgeois respectability had the power to make of these characters social pariahs. Strength would be needed to sustain exile. Out of such risk taking might come the force of suffering that brings clarity and insight. Today, there are no penalties to pay, no world of respectability to be excommunicated from. Bourgeois society as such is over.

In Gornick's formulation, the great novels of love were written in an era when marriage, pregnancy and adultery were matters of life and death. The novels hinged on a love that was constrained by society; now that these constraints have been all but eliminated, the great novels of love are no more, and we are increasingly less confident in love's existence beyond their pages. Many suspect it was a ruse all along, and who can really blame them?

Gornick does not enjoin us to mourn the passing of bourgeois society, and she seems to suggest that love's exhaustion as a literary theme will find itself replaced, eventually, with something else, just as love had superseded the previous great themes, nature and God: "We are cast adrift, radically 'alone' now, in literature as in life, groping in the books we write to find the metaphoric elements that will achieve new power." It is unclear what those elements are, or even that they must exist and will reveal themselves to us in good time. What we do know is that "the very meaning of human risk" is no longer "embedded in the pursuit of love"; as an ingredient in our literary concoctions, love "might dilute the strength of a good novel rather than gather in it." Meanwhile, she who has abandoned love's refuge finds herself profoundly alone in her "drama of the self," her "astonishing effort to climb up out of original shame—and the awful, implicit knowledge that love, contrary to all sentimental insistence, cannot do the job" for her. "For better and for worse," Gornick explains, "that effort is a solitary one, more akin to the act of making art than of making family."

Gornick, were she asked, might deem Nehring's desire "to dive down into feeling and come up magically changed" atavistic. It appears to be the last, reactionary gasp of an era that Gornick suggests has passed with our grandmothers, who, had they loosened their stays, had all the world to gain, or lose.

For Nehring, whose defense of love is at bottom an argument that love is essential to the creative endeavor, the question of the expression and survival of art and literature in the era of non-love is one that should matter. If we have embraced this facsimile of love as our relational model, does it not follow that perhaps we have created a literature of facsimile, a nonliterature, to accompany it?

Her chapter headings suggested to me that this would be, in the end, the underlying nature of her inquiry—she proceeds from "Love as Wisdom" and "Love as Inequality" on through to the seventh and final chapter, "Love as Art." The premise of this chapter—that love itself, independent of substantive creative output, can be a form of art as exquisite as any concerto or oil painting—is one for which Nehring believes she has laid the foundations in her preceding chapters, which tell of the many women whose greatest achievements were dependent upon their preternatural ability to love.

The apotheosis of this is Margaret Fuller, the feminist, transcendentalist and editor of *The Dial*, who was too much woman even for the greatest man of her time. "You appeal to sympathies I have not," Ralph Waldo Emerson told Fuller; "All natures seem poor be-

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side one so rich," he confided to his journal. Nehring describes her as "always queenly" and "a lover *par excellence*," warning us that "a little of Fuller's energy always pleased her interlocutors; the whole of it put them into flight." If Nehring fails to substantiate her claims that "never did Fuller act as boldly, write as gorgeously, or argue as acutely as when she loved" and that "her public treatises often pale next to her letters," her basic insight into Fuller's life, and that of these other warrior princesses, is one supported by no less than Emerson himself: "Nature does rarely say her best words to us out of serene and splendid weather."

So when Nehring wonders whether it was Fuller's problem or the world's that those she encountered were "not strong enough to inhale Fuller's undistilled emotion," she clearly believes no one could doubt that it was the world's. And it was, but not because polite society could not tolerate so slight a threat as Fuller, whose drowning with her illegitimate baby and his father, a disreputable Italian count, as she returned home from Europe was apparently a great relief to her scandalized Massachusetts circle. It is a problem that was and remains relevant because if there is a real connection between great love and great deeds or great art, a world in which love has been so eroded may imperil the fates of these others. This seems to me to be the most important repercussion of Nehring's thesis, and one that, oddly, she entirely ignores. We love so much less, she tells us, and our greatness, in art and otherwise, depends upon our ability to love. What, then, given the state of our love, can we expect of our art and philosophy, literature and music?

Nehring quotes Ortega y Gasset on the curiosity that "both Stendahl and Chateaubriand took their love affairs much more seriously than their work." It is peculiar, the Spanish philosopher considers, "that only those incapable of producing great work believe that the contrary is the proper conduct: to take science, art, or politics seriously and disdain love affairs as mere frivolities." In this light, it seems possible that Fuller's letters were the most original of her writings; that Frida Kahlo "used her painting to feed the artwork that was her *love life*"; that the structural core of Hannah Arendt's monumental thinking was welded in a lifelong conversation with her second husband, Heinrich Blücher, that was itself a magnum opus.

Arendt's relationship with Blücher, as her biographer Elisabeth Young-Bruehl has demonstrated, was the most important of her life. Her infamous affair with Martin Heidegger was significant but ultimately secondary to the intellectual partnership she formed with Blücher, an autodidact who published almost nothing but was a much beloved lecturer at Bard College, where he taught for many years while Arendt wrote her books. This is just one of the many key details that Nehring gets right. Correct, also, is her characterization of Emily Dickinson, redeemed from her long scholarly captivity as the lady in white, a hermetic poetic priestess of a sensibility so squeamish she could hardly bear to pass her parlor door. As Brenda Wineapple recently documented in her excellent biography *White Heat: The Friendship of Emily Dickinson and Thomas Wentworth Higginson*, the *frisson* of Dickinson's poetry derived from what Nehring describes floridly as a "carnivorous want" that came from holding the world, and sexual intimacy, at bay. But it seems bizarre that if all these women were great lovers of one sort or another—and I believe that they were—and if love was the precondition for their accomplishments, that what Nehring would learn from our culture's degradation of love, our certainty that its frivolity cannot compare with such serious matters as politics, science and literature, is not that our art is in trouble but, rather, that our lives can be our art.

"When I was in high school," Nehring explains, "my English teacher told our class that the most important thing about life was to live it as if it were a good novel—as if, she said, it were a good film script. 'Would audiences *walk out* during the movie of your life?'" The teacher was censured by school authorities, but Nehring took this lesson to heart, and it is the lesson she hopes we will glean from her book: that the life of anyone who lives "deliberately, gracefully, inventively, and fearlessly—can be a *piece* of art."

Nehring has little to say about our contemporary arts and letters, and makes no predictions as to their future in her hopeful "new era"; these extraordinary fruits of love, which have thus far been held up as its absolution, are not, apparently, what's truly at stake. I wonder if this silence is the consequence of confusion. Perhaps Nehring ignores the role of the thing itself—the art, the achievements—because her vocabulary is muddled. Despite the subtitle to her epilogue, "*Waging Love*: Toward a New Definition of Eros," Nehring never attempts to define the "love" vindicated in her book's title against the "romance" that modifies it after the colon. Throughout the book, "love," "romance," "erotic culture," "amorous passion" and various other terms are used carelessly, without regard for each one's distinct, individual meaning.

"Love" and "romance" are hardly synonymous, yet in Nehring's telling, the most tempestuous incarnations of the latter seem to define the former almost in its entirety. Love's other crucial aspects—care and responsibility, empathy and commitment—are bit players in her narrative. But concurrently with passion, it is these elements of love that make the art and achievements she idealizes possible. The practice of art resembles childbirth and rearing far more than lovemaking or even falling in love, and it is this encompassing love, rather than mere romance, that one must harness in order to produce art; this great love is what makes the birthing of art and then its passage into the wider world, where so often the maker finds that love gone unrequited, bearable.

There is an alternative explanation for Nehring's silence, which is that her book, for all that it glorifies their authors, cares little about the masterworks: the tracts, novels, poems and paintings. It is, rather, a book that takes these justifying principles as the building blocks

(Untitled)

night promises to be long
there we'll remain alone

or maybe there
we'll never be lonely

artists of the impossible
we hardly belong to ourselves

our shadows weave the illusion

of our dreams and feed
with slow movements

they shriek across an instant
night's envelope is torn

they go mad and search about
in their blazing heart

they need to hear once more
silence's echo turned to stone

AMINA SAÏD
(*Translated from the French by Peter Thompson*)

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for a theory of life that gleans what it can from art and has no intention of giving art back its due. Such a work is not a vindication of love through the evidence of love's necessity to art; it is a book that vindicates lifestyle through its relation to an ineffable artiness.

If that is the case, then it makes sense that Nehring wouldn't entertain the possibility that our relationship to romantic love has and may still change in ways that are elemental, that this change is one visible in our altered literary landscape and that, in a thousand years, the Western love tradition might be unrecognizable or a quaint historical artifact to our descendants. "It is a peculiar form of cultural narcissism to imagine that only we, in the modern day, are capable of such refined and transformative emotions," Nehring chides us. Perhaps, but it may also be a form of narcissism to imagine that those who preceded and will succeed us must think, feel and love as we do.

The points Nehring does make, quite plainly, constitute a charter for her nascent republic of love. We should embrace love, she tells us, as ecstatic, risky, transgressive, unequal and perhaps violent. It is, she has said, a faith, a demon and a divine madness, but the suffering it induces may be the crucible in which we refine our souls. Individually any one of these recommendations should come with a caveat, and to her credit, most of them do; in sum, they begin to sound Dionysian—a bit like the tragic, mad love of antiquity that, as Lewis describes, "plunges otherwise sane people (usually women) into crime and disgrace. Such is the love of Medea, of Phaedra, of Dido; and such the love from which maidens pray that the gods may protect them." These are all the vital elements of a love cult, and Nehring herself—who tells us that as she writes these words, "I bear the bodily scars of a loss or two in love. I have been derailed by love, hospitalized by love, flung around five continents, shaken, overjoyed, inspired, and unsettled by love"—seems a fitting high priestess; she has already been marked in the initiation rites.

I don't fault her for the sentiment behind this vision. If in our world of serial marriages and friendly divorces, when our freedom is so great and what we do with it so little, the only alternative to the prepackaged non-love Nehring describes is a love cult, then sign me up; I, too, have felt this yearning, and could use a little ecstasy now and again. I pray the gods will protect me from plunging into crime and disgrace, but I also hope that, when all these brave new lovers stop to catch their breath, they will write a poem or novel, or two, for posterity. ■

Alice's Wonderlands

by JANA PRIKRYL

Alice Guy Blaché
Cinema Pioneer.
Edited by Joan Simon.
Yale. 148 pp. $40.

"Records show that about three-fourths of matinee audiences are woman," wrote the Hollywood mogul Irving Thalberg in 1924, his use of an abstract noun underscoring his philosophy. "That is why I say that pictures should be made primarily for the feminine mind." Barely 25, Thalberg had recently come to MGM from Universal, where in the space of five years he had managed a revolution—including streamlining production and yoking each director to a producer elevated to oversee every aspect of the creative process—that had spread in Hollywood after World War I. In this matter of the feminine mind, the wisdom he offered was not original: it had long been a truism that women went to the movies in large numbers and that a sagacious businessman would indulge their tastes. What many people had forgotten by 1924, or would forget soon after—and would never know to forget today—is that the "audiences are woman" hypothesis had been taken to mean something very different just a few years earlier. It had been one of many overlapping, contradictory explanations, often rehashed in the press, for the surprising power of women in filmmaking. If female viewers decided the fate of movies, who better to make movies than females?

At one point in the 1910s, Universal had as many as nine women under contract as directors. (After Thalberg became manager in 1919, only one woman was hired to direct.) It wasn't just that an astonishing number of women occupied key creative positions—half of silent-era screenwriters were women, for example. Even women still working their way up could appreciate the egalitarian climate of the industry. Not yet standardized, it was struggling to meet a booming demand for fresh product. For a brief period its male entrepreneurs and innovators required all talent on deck; gender norms were a luxury they preferred to forgo. Social currents also fostered this openness: at the turn of the century women were finding their voices in public life, working outside the home in growing numbers and organizing and agitating for temperance, suffrage and birth control. "Never before in civilization," wrote Jane Addams in 1909, "have such numbers of young girls been suddenly released from the protection of the home and permitted to walk unattended upon city streets and to work under alien roofs; for the first time they are being prized more for their labor power than for their innocence, their tender beauty, their ephemeral gaiety." As movies grew in popularity alongside these public revisions of feminine virtue, the notion of women making movies became less of a leap. The cultural moment lasted just under twenty years, collapsing under the combined weight of censorship and redoubled sexism around the time, ironically, that American women got the vote. Their power in Hollywood never recovered. In 1920 Houghton Mifflin, unwittingly heralding the end of an era, published a guide called *Careers for Women*, where among entries on architecture, business and medicine was a chapter on film directing. When the guide was reissued in 1934, the section on directing was simply dropped.

As for ourselves, we can hardly afford to be smug. The persistent scarcity of women in cinema periodically streaks back into headlines like a comet. The most recent sighting was this past fall and winter, when talk about Kathryn Bigelow receiving an Academy Award nomination for directing *The Hurt Locker*, and the release of films by women about women who enlarged possibilities for women—Anne Fontaine's *Coco Before Chanel*, Mira Nair's *Amelia*, Drew Barrymore's *Whip It*—presented another moment for taking stock. In a year-end essay, Manohla Dargis of the *New York Times* cited some painful statistics: in the eighty-year history of the Academy Awards, three women (Lina Wertmüller, Jane Campion and Sofia Coppola) have been nominated for best director, and none of them left with Oscar. "Of the almost 600 new movies that will be reviewed in The New York Times by the end of 2009," Dargis wrote, "about 60 were directed by women, or 10 percent." A few days later in the *Times Magazine*, Daphne Merkin profiled the commercially successful director Nancy Meyers as the exception that proves the rule. Alas, in a backward glance at women in film, Merkin epitomized the culture's longstanding amnesia toward the brief reign of female directors.

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She wrote of "a tradition in place since the 1910s of women writing and editing for the movies. (Anita Loos wrote for D.W. Griffith; Frances Marion worked on about 200 movies starting in the midteens.)" All true, but as long as you're name-dropping, wouldn't it be nearer the mark to mention Lois Weber, Ida May Park or Lucille McVey Drew, among a dozen other commercially successful female directors of the silent era?

Perhaps the memory of those women has been eclipsed by our burning for the actresses of the 1930s. The tremendous appeal of films made just before the adoption of the Production Code, with their sublime indifference to middle-class propriety, and of sparkling screwball comedies produced after the Code, with their more artful handling of sex—and especially their complex, self-aware female leads (Claudette Colbert, Irene Dunne, Katharine Hepburn)—has come to stand for the moment when films, for once, gave women their due. Trying to look further back, our vision fails to curve over the horizon. To some historians, the women of the silent era appear fundamentally silly. In *Complicated Women*, Mick LaSalle pokes fun at the pent-up sex drive of a 1920s starlet: "She played the glamorous woman who could—if she so chose, but she never chose, but she could if she wanted to, but she never wanted to—behave with the same license as a man." How intriguing, then, that women at that time were far more professionally liberated than those of the next decade, whose career choices were reduced to superstar or seamstress (or, occasionally, editor).

The kinds of movies that flourished in that co-ed environment are hard to summarize, partly because women directed all kinds; unlike Nancy Meyers, they didn't specialize in "women's pictures." Another complicating factor is that the period's archival record is spotty; as the historian Anthony Slide has pointed out, in many cases what has survived of each director's films is not her best work. Nor had the medium reached maturity; most of the films look crude to eyes accustomed to the work of Carl Theodor Dreyer and Dziga Vertov, which doesn't mean they aren't surprising or satisfying to watch. For some years toward the end of this era, and auguring its end at the hands of censors, directors like Weber stood for moral uplift, for movies with a message. The early 1910s were the heyday of the serial heroine, when every week a fresh episode of *The Hazards of Helen* or *The Perils of Pauline*—written and often co-directed by the women who played the title roles—would prove that a young lady could chase robbers across the top of a speeding train just as well as a man, if not better. But the first decade of filmmaking, roughly 1896–1907, belonged to one female director alone, and by the 1910s she was a crucial precursor for the Helens and Paulines.

Alice Guy was a 21-year-old secretary in Paris when she went to see her first film, which happened to be the first film ever projected on a screen. It was Louis and Auguste Lumière's *Sortie d'usine*, an *actualité* of roughly fifty seconds shot in 1895, in which a mighty volume of workers pour out of the gate of the Lumière factory in Lyon. The thing you notice is that most of the workers are women. Guy attended the screening with Léon Gaumont, the manager of a company that sold photographic equipment, and into whose employ she had talked her way with a pertness worthy of Myrna Loy, if her memoir is to be believed. Interviewing her for the position, Gaumont had balked: "I fear, Mademoiselle, that you may be too young." "But Sir," she replied, "I'll get over that." She got the job. Six or seven days a week, from 8 AM to 8 PM, she sat at a typewriter hidden behind a screen and "had to answer the imperious bell-summons from the directorial desk."

MUSÉE GAUMONT, PARIS

A still from *La Fée aux choux* (1896 or 1900), by Alice Guy

Around this time Gaumont was poised to take over the firm he'd been managing, turning its focus toward the nascent motion picture camera. In 1895, the same year the Lumières began exhibiting the brief documentary scenes that their *cinématographe* was able to photograph, develop and project, Gaumont bought the patents to Georges Demenÿ's competing designs. With Thomas Edison in the United States tweaking his Kinetoscope (which exhibited moving pictures but couldn't make them), it was a time of jostling for position in an industry that had, as yet, no clearly marketable use. This much Guy could see after she accompanied Gaumont to the *Sortie d'usine* screening and, subsequently, watched Gaumont's technicians make comparable "demonstration films." She found them "both brief and repetitious" and "thought that one might do better." "Gathering my courage," she writes in her memoir with her typical mixture of modesty and pluck, "I timidly proposed to Gaumont that I might write one or two little scenes and have a few friends perform in them."

Within several years, Guy was head of the Gaumont studio in Paris (by then rival to the commercially cutthroat Pathé-Frères), where from 1904 to 1907, in addition to making silent comedies and melodramas and trick films, she directed countless *phonoscènes*, among the first synchronized-sound films. These crooning, pacing, winking, bowing turns by popular singers of the day anticipate by some twenty years the Vitaphone shorts that would help build an appetite for sound in the late 1920s. At one point Guy managed to book the renowned Italian tenor Enrico Caruso, who backed out at the last minute. "Which proves," she observed, "that a good voice is not always the sign of an excellent education." At Gaumont, beginning in 1905, she also hired and oversaw the work of other directors and assistants, notably Ferdinand Zecca and Louis Feuillade; "It was as if, with one mighty stroke, she had single-handedly created the entire French film industry," Anthony Slide has written. Guy left Gaumont at 33 to marry a 24-year-old Englishman, Herbert Blaché, with whom she would have two children while juggling directing and the establishment of Solax, her own studio in New Jersey.

Not unlike other female directors who

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thrived after her in the 1910s, Guy had a career whose ending was abrupt (and linked to a wrenching divorce). All her work was thought lost by the time she returned to France in the mid-1920s. Not only was her directing career finished; her very name was fading to a ghostly footnote. In the 1950s she wrote her memoir in an attempt to reinsert herself into the history of filmmaking. The effort paid off, with a slight delay. This winter the Whitney Museum screened a selection of her more than 130 extant films (she directed about 700; of her forty or so features, only three survive). Recently Kino released a box set of *Gaumont Treasures: 1897–1913*, with one of the DVDs devoted to the first decade of Alice Guy's career. More recently Kino also issued a DVD of *The Ocean Waif* (1916), one of the three surviving features. It is the first time since World War I that her work is being looked at by audiences not taking notes for doctoral dissertations.

At the dawn of filmmaking, originality was neither a creative goal nor a commercial value. Many of Guy's oldest films are rehashes of the Lumières' single-shot views: a scene of reedy boys romping in the white cascades of a river; a scene of blacksmiths forging horseshoes. (In Guy's version of the blacksmiths, a little girl traipses across the scene clutching a doll. The smithies pay her no attention.) By 1906, as the business became more lucrative, Pathé-Frères placed moles in Guy's studio, and the company remade her ideas virtually while she shot them. When she protested, Pathé merely invited her to plant her own spies on their set. Elsewhere she economized by purchasing backdrops from the Lumières (for instance, a plywood set of Parisian rooftops) and then reshooting the Lumières' story with minor variations (thieves being chased across rooftops).

Early cinema does not exactly seduce the viewer with lush visuals or subtle performances. As even Alison McMahan, Guy's biographer and most tireless champion, phrased it at a panel discussion last fall, "Nobody wants to sit down on a Saturday night" and watch the films of Alice Guy, but everyone wants to know why "both her careers were over by the time she could vote in either country where she lived." Yet contemporary viewers could also fail to be moved by the moving picture: in those earliest days, when people were unaccustomed to the medium, silent film retained the strangeness it has reacquired since. You get a hint of this in *Red Velvet Seat*, Antonia Lant's vast, piquant anthology of women's writings on the first fifty years of cinema. Here we discover an article from the *San Francisco Examiner* of 1897 by Alice Rix ("no dates found," says her bio note at the back of the book), who gives a candid assessment of the medium:

> The lights go down and the single light boxed in the gallery reaches out over the house and burns on the canvas screen. The audience is shrouded in the silent dark. The light widens on the canvas and suddenly the screen is alive with the figures of men, moving, gesticulating, smiling, speaking, without sound. It is weird, peculiar, a little uncomfortable—a grayish shuddering semblance of humanity, neither shadow nor substance, neither quick nor dead.
>
> It is very trying to the eyes, but it is even more bewildering to the brain. One cannot but seek to liken it to something—and it is like nothing in all the world. It is like nothing I have ever thought of as belonging to other worlds. These silent, moving shapes are neither ghostly nor shadowy. They are fully featured and of the earth. Their unreality is in their grayish color, their strange silence and the eternal blinding, flickering light that plays over them as at the morgue water runs over the faces and bodies of the dead.
>
> This is not a pretty simile, but the Veriscope is not an entirely pretty exhibition. It is in its way a little awful.

At the turn of the century, film comprised a "cinema of attractions," in the words of film scholar Tom Gunning: it was a carnival diversion, a vaudeville bauble, a machine-age marvel. One recalls the lament in Ezra Pound's 1920 poem "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley": "The age demanded an image/Of its accelerated grimace." The borrowings (and outright thefts) that marked Alice Guy's first years behind the camera make it all the more interesting that, in her memoir, she nominates a different sort of film for her maiden effort in directing: *La Fée aux choux* (The Cabbage Fairy). This film is not a documentary scene such as the Lumières were making; it is not a trick film à la Méliès; it's not a chase caper or a one-gag bit of slapstick. It is a fantasy along feminine lines, a minute-long meringue in which a smiling lady curtsies to the camera amid wooden cutouts painted to look like cabbages, bends down behind first one "cabbage" and then another, and plucks up several squirming, naked infants, placing them on the ground in front of her. The contrivance of the whole production—revolving around this rather stiff pixie cultivating her two-dimensional garden—has the unexpected effect of making the babies look like what they are: somebody's actual babies, probably catching a chill.

Some scholars don't believe this film was her first: Guy's claim that it was shot in 1896 is contradicted by the Gaumont catalog, which dates it to 1900. Guy also seems to confuse it with a more sophisticated film, *La Sage-femme de première classe* (Midwife to the Upper Class), whose date of 1902 is not in question. *La Sage-femme* is a variation on the *choux* theme, with fancier camera work, three characters instead of one and a gently satirical story: a wife and husband, played by Guy, visit a midwife who runs a cabbage patch, where they choose their baby from several specimens pulled out of cabbages. At the end, when the new mother is walking off with her child, the husband reluctantly turns to the midwife and drops a few coins into her hand. As Alan Williams writes in his supremely sensible essay for the catalog of the Whitney show, *Alice Guy Blaché: Cinema Pioneer*, whether Guy filmed *La Fée* in 1896 or four years later is fairly moot: "no one else in the world, at that time, would probably have made such a film. It is, in terms of cinema, a relatively *original* work in a medium that thrived on imitation."

The genial absurdity of both cabbage films—and the odd confidence of their interest in women's bodies and experiences—heralded what would become most special about Alice Guy's vision. In a remarkable film of 1906 called *Madame a des envies* (Madame Has Her Cravings), the main character is comically pregnant, her belly stuffed with what might be a breadbox, and driven to snatch food out of strangers' mouths. Her giddy refusal to restrain herself, her appetite for mischief—she's filmed in groundbreaking close-ups licking her lips and rolling her eyes with pleasure, all but catching the eye of the audience—tempts me to dream that a 17-year-old named Charles Chaplin saw this movie in some English town that same year, when he was touring the music halls and already standing out amid a troupe of clowning teenagers.

Guy's comedies often feature cross-dressing as part of the joke, as if she couldn't stop appealing the life sentence of gender. In some films the cross-dressing is garden-variety, adding an extra wacky flourish to an already wacky tale. In *Le Matelas alcoolique* (The Drunken Mattress, 1906), the seamstress who unknowingly sews a drunkard into the mattress she's restuffing is, in fact, male. The comedy here is all in the gags—"she" rolls with the mattress down an embankment,

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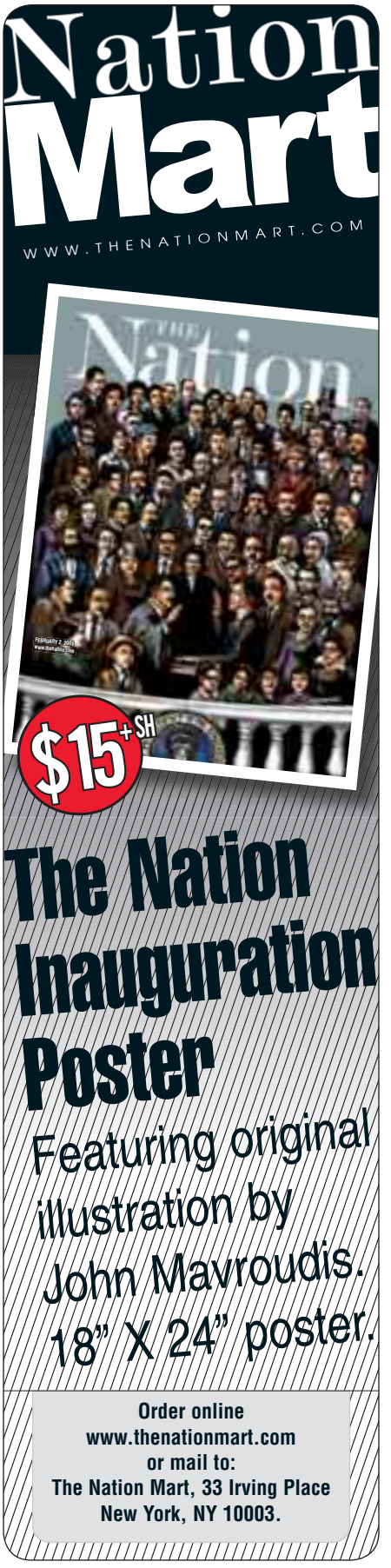
hefts it across Paris, drags it from under an automobile, among other indignities. It probably helped that a man was performing these stunts. Alice attended a screening of the film in Rouen and later recalled "an explosion of gaiety" in the seats around her. "In front of me, one young woman twisted in her chair and begged between shouts of laughter: 'Enough, enough, I'll wet myself!'" Things get a little more Dada in *La Femme collante* (The Sticky Woman), a short but deep comedy of the same year, in which a genuine woman goes to the post office with her maid. The maid sticks out her tongue—an organ that could double for Mick Jagger's—to help with affixing stamps, exciting the attention of a mustachioed rascal nearby. When he lunges over and kisses her, they get stuck, and a scissor-snip leaves the scamp's mustache on the maid's deadpan, self-possessed face.

The theme reaches its wildest embodiment in *Résultats du féminisme* (The Consequences of Feminism, 1906), a cutting satire of gender roles in which the cross-dressing is worn on the inside. Women are in charge; men preen and sew and cannot make up their minds. Women look through them unless there's a chance to pounce on one and devour him with kisses. One poor fellow swoons and his Lotharia revives him with smelling salts, the quicker to lure him into the double bed idling in the background. All this is genuinely funny—the guy who keeps mincing around with mannerisms that today look high camp must have ruptured a few laugh hernias in Guy's time—but it leads to a curiously ambivalent conclusion. When the woman who seduced the mincing fellow ignores his pleas to help care for their children, he summons a crowd of discarded men. Together they storm the women's club, kick the ladies out and claim it for their own—their rightful, dominant place in society finally re-established. But for the audience to cheer their triumph, we must accept the terms of this satire and absorb the thought that half of society gets a rotten deal from the other half. It's a sneaky little farce.

"What particularly excited me about film," wrote Maya Deren in a 1946 piece that appears in *Red Velvet Seat*, "was its magic ability to make even the most imaginative concept seem real. For if the tree in the scene was real and true, the event which one caused to occur beneath it seemed also real and true. And so one could create new realities which, being rendered visible, could stand up to the challenge of 'Show me!'" The political correlative of this notion—that women gained crucial confidence simply by seeing themselves in new ways on the big screen—emerges from the polyvocal *Red Velvet Seat* as a unifying theme. And to the extent that Alice Guy's work embodies this idea, the arc of her career also outlines its limits. By 1910, when she was directing her own Solax-produced films in New Jersey, Guy was married with a child (and had acquired a new surname: Blaché). She was no longer the only woman in the business, and it seems that her impulse to "make imaginative concepts seem real" changed into a simpler need to keep making movies. As Karen Ward Mahar writes in her valuable history *Women Filmmakers in Early Hollywood*, the industry by then had acquired a concern for moral standards (motivated by the bottom line, of course), which it looked to women to raise and maintain. The National Censorship Board was established in 1909, and by the mid-1910s not only were most censors women but female directors were often touted in advertising to underline the "artistic" status of their films. Guy Blaché, whose Gaumont offerings had once been deemed too risqué for squeamish American audiences, now was held up as an ideal filmmaker, a woman of "enlightenment and superior breeding." Her movies got longer and their narratives more elaborate, and though spunky heroines might rather breathtakingly save the day in her westerns, or little girls help save ailing siblings in her domestic dramas, some of her anarchic energy was sacrificed.

If Alice Guy Blaché aligned herself with a refined ideal that sought higher-class audiences, a younger generation of women were all too eager to pander to the masses. It can be jolting to see one of the early serials, ten- to twenty-minute capers that came out on a weekly basis in the 1910s and whose creative vision was inseparable from their leading ladies. They're the definition of good clean fun, but still, you don't expect a Victorian damsel—cinched waist and ankle-length skirt, her long hair in ringlets—to duke it out with gun-slinging smugglers. Helen Holmes, the original star of *The Hazards of Helen*, which ran for 119 episodes from 1914 to 1917, wrote many of its episodes and collaborated with her director husband, J.P. McGowan, later starting her own production company under which she made further serials. She begins more than one installment as a young lady politely defying the ranks of men in the railway office who'd deny her a job as telegraph operator, and finishes by single-handedly foiling a worse set of bad guys who had attacked her isolated outpost. In Pathé's *The Perils of Pauline*, the heroine travels the world hoping to become a great



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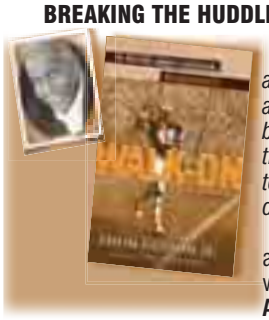

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writer, all the while evading the homicidal advances of a man who's after her inheritance. During the early 1900s an image of the New Woman was taking shape—athletic, fearless, independent—and the popularity of serials showed how ravenous was the appetite for her: when a fan magazine asked readers to name their favorite motion picture star in 1916, Pearl White, *a k a* Pauline, beat out both Mary Pickford and Lillian Gish.

The viral speed with which these heroines attained blockbuster fame and then melted away into second- and third-run houses rivals any career arc of the Internet age; and yet it's hard to dismiss the idea that they inspired a generation of girls who would, by the early 1930s, be forging a new image of femininity onscreen. For it wasn't only that, say, Grace Cunard playing Patsy Montez, a rich debutante in *The Purple Mask* (1916–17), donned a cape and stole from the rich in order to improve the lives of various unfortunate women; it was also that Cunard and her co-director, Francis Ford (John Ford's older brother), visibly collaborated on these films, and that the head of Universal, Carle Laemmle (several years before promoting Irving Thalberg), threw the mighty dollars of his promotion machine behind their serial—specifically, "a twenty-two-page press book, 'teaser' ads in newspapers, souvenir buttons, mirrors, postcards, and, of course, broken coins." Strong women had value.

As if life were imitating art, a relatively collaborative culture thrived in Hollywood during these years. Perhaps no director starred more convincingly in the serial of her own life than Gene Gauntier, whose career was long finished by the time she wrote her memoir *Blazing the Trail* in 1928. Gauntier was the writer and star of *The Girl Spy*, whose popularity as a feature in 1909 led to its two-year run as a serial and ultimately to *A Hitherto Unrelated Incident of the Girl Spy* in 1911. Little in Gauntier's movies can compare with the moment she describes in *Blazing the Trail* as her initial "plunge" into filmmaking: not knowing how to swim, she accepted a friend's offer to join him on location, on Long Island, where a woman was needed to fall forty feet into a river. "I was afraid—horribly so. But I was going through with it if it killed me."

No single thing led to the demise of this relatively egalitarian era in Hollywood. The serials had a naturally short life span, and meanwhile film was under the scrutiny of that other icon of early twentieth-century female power—the reformer. Agitation by women's groups to clean up motion pictures, together with a brief dip in attendance during the recession that followed World War I, was enough to scare the industry into regulating itself and scrapping all those unnatural girl heroes. What became of the female directors who worked in other genres is more ambiguous, having to do with the precarious perch they occupied and the industry's rapid stratification. Most women who rose to prominence behind the camera were partnered, domestically and professionally, with a man. Though the women dominated as directors, they relied on their partners to handle the finances. The arrangement proved disastrous.

In her memoir, Alice Guy Blaché notes with gratitude that her husband, Herbert, insisted on making the deals, freeing her to focus on directing: "I would have embarrassed the men, said Herbert, who wanted to smoke their cigars and to spit at their ease while discussing business." But when he decamped for California with a younger actress in 1918, Alice's career took a nose dive. In misfortune, too, she was a trailblazer: the collaborative, upstart, let's-put-on-a-show business in which she had thrived was coming to resemble every other major industry, streamlined and hierarchical. By the late 1910s clubs and trade associations formed across the country to lubricate the flow of money between powerful executives, and women were locked out of the process of creating new realities. In this climate, if your marriage to a producer husband ended, whom could you approach about your next project? Irving Thalberg?

Guy Blaché gambled on a fellow creative. Alighting in Hollywood in 1920 in hopes of a reconciliation with Herbert (which was not to be), Alice still had enough clout to get a meeting with the world's biggest superstar. At 31, Charlie Chaplin was in the middle of shooting *The Kid*, a film that would deepen and refine the possibilities of silent comedy. Guy Blaché, then 47 with hundreds of films to her credit, proposed making *Un Chapeau de paille d'Italie*, a nineteenth-century French farce, "which I had Americanized as well as I could." His reply was nonnegotiable. "No," he told her, "I intend to make films of more feeling." You might say that a new generation, with subtler tastes, couldn't help but sideline women like Guy Blaché, whose most innovative work lay a decade in the past. Yet *Un Chapeau de paille d'Italie* did get made. René Clair directed it in 1927. In a final twist, Clair decided to shift the action of the mid-century play to 1895—partly from a wish to spoof the earliest years of film, which by then had passed into nostalgia. Two years ago the comedy was screened at the Pordenone Silent Film Festival in Italy, amid a bewitching retrospective of Clair's silent work. It got a lot of laughs. ■

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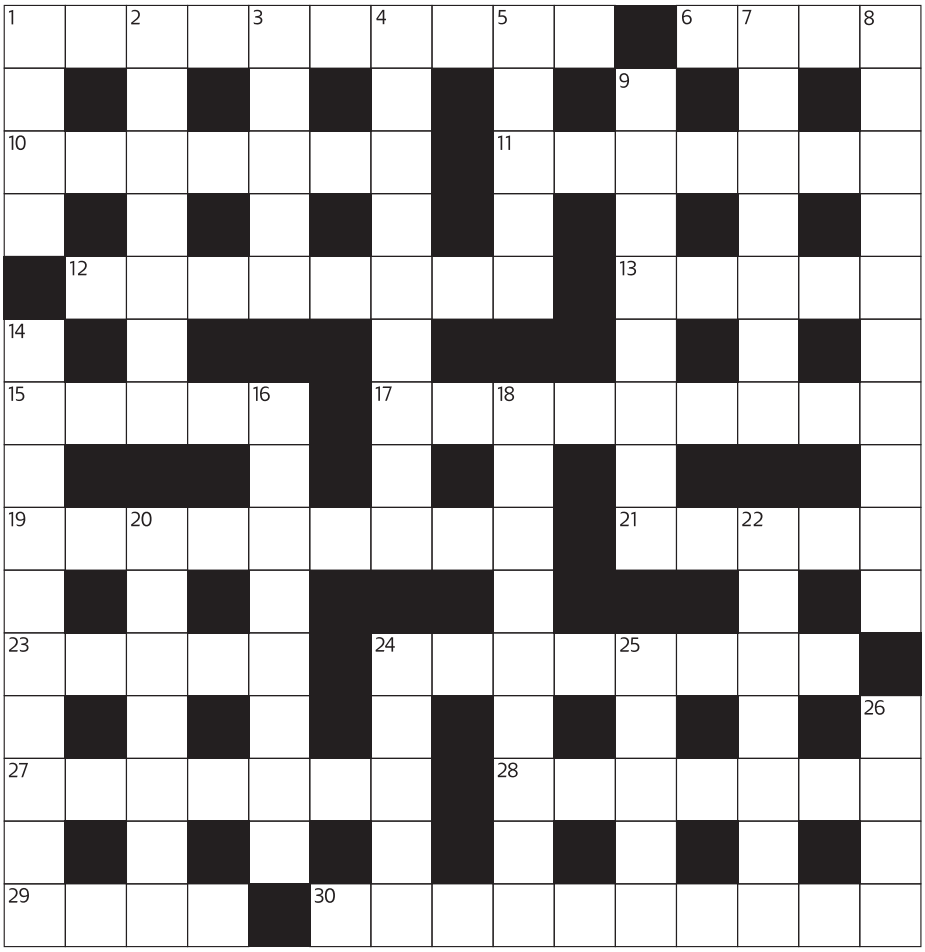
Puzzle No. 1478

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 and **18** down Evidently the butcher refuses to cut up an off-color animal. (1,5,3,1,6,3)

6 Unbleached color. (4)

10 Government take-over headed by such that should be married. (7)

11 One of those things associated with little grains of sand that serves as a fall hindrance. (7)

12 Liqueur served up, in estate settlement. (8)

13 An island in America, primarily, or elsewhere? (5)

15 Associated with 24 down as a comparative certainty. (5)

17 It might make starting difficult. (5,4)

19 Duck! It makes the arms green! (9)

21 Perhaps struck for material gain. (5)

23 Indians of the Brahmin caste? (5)

24 Somewhat ticklish. (8)

27 It shows you may have worked hard, to a certain degree. (7)

28 If 24 down is not natural, one might look into it. (7)

29 and **26** down Brings back sleep on such things as may have gold or silver? (8)

30 Ushers might, in fancy establishments. (10)

DOWN

1 Might cause a scratch. (4)

2 A couple of times a year it almost describes a horse and another animal. (7)

3 Such a measure is for a psychologist. (5)

4 Points to cases that have the indirect object of certain drugs. (9)

5 One might split, tighten, secure or lever. (5)

7 It should be topical, and almost tropical. (7)

8 Certainly not like Cole, being rather careless. (10)

9 Pertains to those of which one might be firm. (8)

14 Watch the old-fashioned type—and stop one that meanders. (4-6)

16 Studying the rhythm of the feet? (8)

18 See 1 across.

20 Such instructions for preparation might be precise, however indirect. (7)

22 Is having such power associated with disaster? (7)

24 The ad make-up might go with Schubert's maiden. (5)

25 The air should be seasonal. (5)

26 See 29 across.

This puzzle originally appeared in the February 26, 1973, issue.

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 994

C	A	L	L	B	O	A	R	D	S		O	S	S	A
A		A		R		W		R		F		P		T
S	A	W	B	U	C	K		E	X	I	G	E	N	T
T		Y		T		W		A		R		E		O
L	I	E	D		B	A	N	D	L	E	A	D	E	R
E		R		R		R		E		S		E		N
S	U	S	P	E	N	D		D	W	I	N	D	L	E
I				M						D				Y
N	I	C	K	E	R	S		W	E	E	D	I	N	G
T		H		M		E		R		S		D		E
H	E	A	D	B	E	A	R	E	R		R	Y	A	N
E		R		E		W		S		A		L		E
A	L	G	E	R	I	A		T	I	C	K	L	E	R
I		E		S		L		L		H		I		A
R	U	S	H		B	L	U	E	P	E	N	C	I	L

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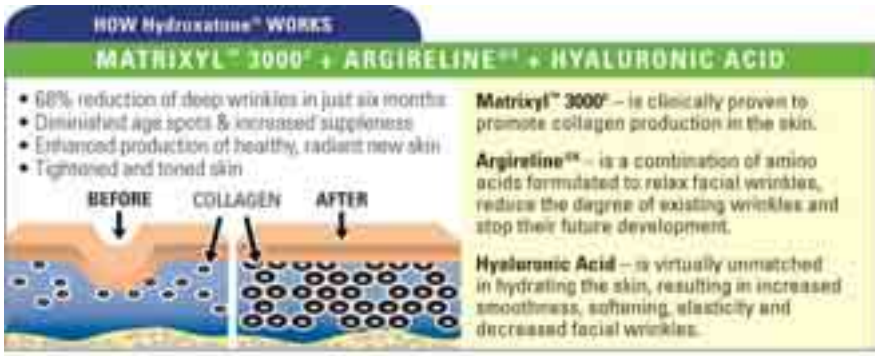
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